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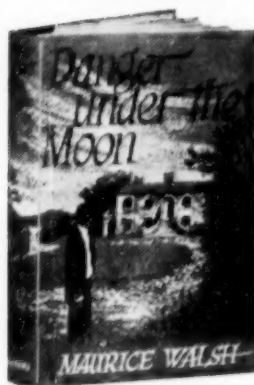


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DOWN: 1, Thermometer; 2, Twinge; 4, Over; 5, The primrose path; 6, Arched; 7, Tickle; 8, Apex; 10, Senator; 14, Y.M.C.A.; 15, Battleships; 19, Immoral; 21, Icon; 25, Remake; 26, Street; 28, Annual; 30, Peri; 31, Peal.

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Four Empty Gin-Bottles

LOUIS GOLDING

I LIKE gin, and my friend and rival, Willem van Kook, doesn't, for though he's a Dutchman, he's a teetotaller. So I happened to have four empty gin-bottles around at the moment I needed them. If Willem needed them, and I don't say he did, he wouldn't have had them around. So I got through, and Willem didn't. Anyhow, that's one explanation of what happened. What happened was this.

Willem was there at the beginning of it all. I mean, he, too, was leaning over Assan's counter, at the United Africa Company's stores, putting in his order for tinned bacon, tinned eggs, tinned bread, and so on. This was in Oda, in the Gold Coast, a hundred miles up-country from Takoradi. We were chatting, Willem and I, about this and that, red ants, the possible new war, women, diamonds. I mean, of course, diamonds in the crudest possible form, diamonds in the alluvial deposit of rivers. For we're a couple of prospectors, he for a Dutch company, and I for a British company, and diamonds and gold

are what interests us. Fellows have to make a living, somehow.

Then in came Umba, a junior clerk from the missionary station way up in Kwenta, which is some ten or twelve days' journey away. He was wheezing like an English tenor, and his eyes were popping out of his head. He obviously had a big hot-potato in his mouth, which he was anxious to get rid of. Down came Assan from his little ladder, and leaned forward, and put his finger to his lips, enjoining discretion. But Umba was an artless young man, and out it came. He wanted to see a big boss, a big boss from one of the companies. The boys way back in Kwenta had struck diamond-sand, plenty diamond-sand. This was in the S-shaped bend of the river, some three hours south of Kwenta.

I didn't look at Willem, Willem didn't look at me. We went on giving our normal orders, then off we strolled to our respective offices. 'So long,' I said. '*À bientôt*,' he said. But he knew what I was going to do, and I knew what he was going to do. And we both knew this

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was the real thing, the sort of thing you go to the Gold Coast for. We would both charge off to hire our boys, collect kit and provisions, and set off through the clammy, clotted jungle to the river below Kwenta, as soon as we knew how.

We were both off before dawn next day. Neither of us knew which route the other was taking, for the simple reason that each of us didn't breathe a single word about it to a single soul. You could take the more or less direct route, and that meant pretty trackless jungle for most of the way. Or you could take the longer route through the scrub where the jungle thinned out a bit, and that added a lot of distance to the journey. And there was the way across the lily-swamps. We might both have taken the same way, and that could have been awkward. But actually we didn't. I like lilies, and made for the swamps. Willem made for the scrub country, as I learned later. He didn't like getting his feet wet. Anyhow, there we were. We were off.

I HAD a pretty good lot of boys on the whole, some forty of them. They were rather young, but what they lacked in experience they made up in good-will. And in those swamps you needed all the good-will you could get hold of. If anything, there was just a little too much good-will knocking around. I liked to hear the boys singing and laughing, but they began to get a little frivolous on the third day out, when they had all settled down to things. By the time the fourth day came round, I'm afraid I began to contemplate them with a rather sour eye. Most of the boys had to keep pretty steady under their heavy head-packs, but the three boys carrying my rifle, my water, and my theodolite, began to get a lot too skittish. They butted each other like buffaloes, they charged against each other, back to back. They all thought it immensely funny. They screeched with laughter. It didn't matter so much about the water-boy, and the gun-boy, but it mattered a lot about Kintampo, the theodolite-boy. It doesn't do a theodolite any good at all to be handled that way. I tried to imbue Kintampo with a sense of his responsibility. But it was no good at all. I tried to put the fear of God into him. I grimaced. I yelled. For five minutes he looked at me with great sad liquid eyes, then he suddenly started cackling with laughter. He had got it into his head that I was being awfully funny. Ten

minutes later he was gambolling around with that precious theodolite as if it were a bunch of bananas.

So I did the only possible thing. I looked round among the older boys for someone with more decorum, and hit on Luke, a rather grizzled unsmiling gentleman. Luke was fine. The theodolite got safely to the end of the day's journey. We bedded down, and that was the end of the fourth day. What happened to Luke during the course of that night I cannot guess. He must have had a sequence of happy dreams, for when I looked round for him, to sling the precious theodolite round his shoulder, I couldn't find him. His face was practically all teeth. His eyes were screwed up and invisible. In fact he was tittering to himself like a grey monkey in a tree. I only recognised him by his grizzled hair.

He had had a better night than I had, for a touch of my old dysentery had got hold of me. I didn't get it badly, but it tended to slow me down quite a lot for two or three days, despite the gin I managed to pack away. I would have preferred to carry the theodolite myself, but a theodolite is a rather heavy gadget when you are enfeebled with dysentery, so I slung it round Kintampo's shoulder again, though with quite a lot of misgiving. He stood there, chuckling, playing tricks with his finger-tips. Though grown up, he looked like a small boy of five.

Some demon seemed to have got hold of Kintampo. Normally these boys are as sure-footed as mules. But if Kintampo slipped once during the next few hours he slipped ten times. When he was erect on both feet, he would play a trick with his left shoulder, bending himself double in front, so that the theodolite started slipping down, and was only prevented from falling by the sudden back-thrust of the shoulders to their normal position. All the boys thought it such a funny trick, they screamed with laughter, slapping their naked thighs with their free hands.

At last I couldn't stand it any more. I yelled at Kintampo so loudly he stopped as if a bullet had hit his chest. Then I asked another boy, Moses by name, to shed his own gear, and take the theodolite over.

The bad luck had started. You can guess what happened? The thing slipped, and if, despite my feebleness, I hadn't jumped forward like a buck, it would have crashed on an outcrop of rock, and that would have been the end of the party. As it was, I only managed

FOUR EMPTY GIN-BOTTLES

to blunt its fall. The theodolite still got a pretty nasty crack, and with a heart like lead I proceeded to check up on it. It would still work, I found. It would still do its job when we got to the bend below Kwenta. But it would need very delicate handling. It would have to be treated like a new-born baby, or a robin's egg. And it was obvious now I could no more hope for that from this lot of boys than I could hope to sprout wings and fly.

So there was only one thing for it. Although I was already feeling like death, I would have to carry the damn thing myself. I grimaced. I managed to get the thing on to my shoulders. We went trudging on. The boys giggled like the male chorus in *Florodora*.

I SAID the bad luck had started, didn't I? Yes, it had only just started. I had another dose that same evening, the moment we got to a clearing where I'd settled to camp for the night. I had just got the theodolite on to the grass beside me, when suddenly I felt a stab like a red-hot nail in the middle of the back of my neck. I had been stung by a flying beetle—and I don't mean a cockchafer.

That tore it. I knew exactly what was going to happen. The back of my neck, the back of my shoulders, my armpits were going to smart like hell. Within a few hours I would be throbbing all over. I wasn't through with my dysentery yet, either, not by any means. It would be totally out of the question to carry the theodolite. I just couldn't make it. It would floor me.

Then suddenly I became vividly aware of my Dutch pal, Willem van Kook. It was as if he were just beyond that clump of plantain, looking out with a grin through a tangle of lianas. He didn't have a gang of nitwit boys. He had no dose of dysentery. He hadn't been stung by any goddam flying beetle. Wherever he was, he was pushing on nice and pretty to the diamond-alluvial below Kwenta. I could have banged my head in fury against the nearest tree-trunk. But the sting was boiling in my neck. Already I could feel the muscles stiffening up.

So I had some sort of a meal, and got my tent put up, and stretched myself out on my camp-bed, and thought. I don't suppose I ever felt so depressed in my life. But I knew being depressed wasn't going to take me to that diamond stuff, so I went on thinking. And thinking didn't get me anywhere, either,

not for two or three hours, not till the moon came up. It was the moon coming up over the matted treetops, the religious moon, the moon of prayer and fetish, that brought the brain-wave sailing towards me, as I lay poisoned on my camp-bed under the breathless West African sky.

I GOT up from my camp-bed, knowing I could still make it, though in an hour or two I would be so stiff the thing would be too heavy for me. I first took out the base and tripod of the theodolite, then I took out the instrument itself, then I screwed them together, there in the centre of the moon-silvered clearing. There was a boy already building the fires for the before-dawn start, but he might have been a lump of log for all the notice I took of him. Under the overhanging boughs of the bananas at one end of the clearing, their hands under their heads, the other boys lay huddled together, each with their loincloths and three or four banana-leaves thrown over them for covering. Though not one of them moved, though they hardly seemed to be breathing, I knew they were wide-awake, I knew that their large round eyeballs were staring at me out of the darkness with curious and fearful speculation.

By this time I was so stiff I could hardly move, yet I managed to get down on all fours before the theodolite. I laid my forehead on the ground, I bary the ground in abasement with the palms of my hands. Then I started chanting a prayer to it, in my own language, for that would be more impressive. It would be better in poetry, too, I thought. So I started:

*Once upon a midnight dreary, while I
pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of
forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly
there came a tapping . . .*

Well, you know the rest of the prayer. It's quite a long one by the time you get to the end of it. That night I gave the Theodolite God eight complete stanzas. That was enough, I thought, to get the point over. They would be a good deal more respectful, like the Israelites carrying the Ark of the Law through the Wilderness. Despite my dysentery and my beetle-bite, we would still make it, and to hell with Willem van Kook. I raised myself

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on to my two feet, unscrewed the theodolite, brought it back to my tent, and lowered myself on to my bed. Despite my ache and pains, I managed to get a little sleep.

THE way I felt when I rose was nobody's business. But we had breakfast. I ordered the three bush-boys to start hacking out our path for us with their bush-knives, and I told the rest of the boys to stand by their packs. I didn't think it mattered which of them I ordered to load himself with the theodolite. I could see from their subdued manner they all knew they had a god among them, and would treat him with the utmost deference. But I thought I might as well give the grizzled Luke another chance. He was, after all, a grandfather.

'You, Luke!' I said. 'You take up Massa Box!'

Luke's reaction was astonishing. He turned right about and, with a terrified look over his shoulder, ran off into the jungle.

'Hell!' I swore. 'The fellow's a nitwit! I should have known better! You, Kintampo!' I shouted. 'Take up Massa Box!'

Kintampo shook his head. He pushed even further forward his already far-protruding lower lip. 'No!' his curly pate went. 'No!' 'Take up that box!' I roared.

He shook his curly pate again. His large eyes were liquid with fear, like a dog's. I turned to a third boy, a fourth. I shouted at them, and pleaded with them, I promised them presents, lovely coloured cloths, lashings of tobacco. But all they did was to thrust out their lips, and shake their heads from side to side. They would not pick up that theodolite. It was a god, a new god, and they were afraid of it. I had overdone it, in fact, last night in the enchanted clearing. I had given them three or four stanzas too many of Edgar Allan Poe's 'Raven'.

I was done for. I was stymied. What about carrying the thing myself? No good. I'd have collapsed after a hundred yards, I was feeling so frightful, way beyond the power of gin to help me out. What about threatening them with my gun? Oh no. In a few seconds they would have disappeared into the jungle like so many wisps of vapour. I'd have had to carry all the rest of the kit, not to mention the theodolite. And, in any case, the top boys back at base don't like you brandishing rifles in the teeth of the natives.

I sat down. There was nothing else for me to do in any case, the way I felt. A parrot cawed in a high tree. 'My name's Willem!' the parrot said. 'Willem van Kook! We're not doing badly, thanks very much!' I don't suppose the tears actually rolled down my cheeks, but even that would have been some sort of relief, I expect.

What was I to do? What on earth was I to do? Was I just to sit around in this stinking clearing till I pulled round, while Willem got a day's start of me, two days' start, maybe? An hour passed, two hours, the sky got dark. A storm was brewing. I helped myself to a noggin of gin. And another. And another. Now and again I started up again, yelling, cajoling, bribing. But it was no good at all. The boys stood around silently, their eyes on the ground. They hated letting me down. They were sorry for me. But they were far more afraid of the god than they were sorry for me.

I FINISHED off a bottle of gin. That made four bottles I'd got through, without help. That was not bad going for me. I'm not one of your coast-soakers. I reached for a fifth bottle, and was about to remove the tinfoil from the stopper, when a finger of lightning suddenly flickered across the sky. A moment later there was a sharp volley of thunder, like a regiment of heavy machine-guns. Then there was more lightning. Then there was more thunder. It was one of those storms that come and go, without rain. But they're very dazzling and noisy while they last.

Then a brain-wave got hold of me, a brand-new brain-wave. It may have been a particularly spectacular jerk of lightning, or it may have been the last noggin of the fourth bottle of gin. With extraordinary agility, seeing that I was a man half-dead with dysentery and nearly paralysed with the bite of a flying beetle, I got hold of the theodolite, its base, and its legs, hurtled forth into the centre of the clearing, fixed them together and put the contraption down.

Then I addressed myself to the gods of the thunder and the lightning and the theodolite. 'Yes, old boy! I heard what you said the first time! It's the fault of these boys! They're bad boys! They're yellow boys!'

I turned and faced them, accusingly, Kintampo and Luke and Moses and Mark and the others. They're great ones for Bible

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names out on the Gold Coast. I specified their names. I pointed to them. I pointed to the theodolite. I talked to the thunder. I winked back at the lightning. The boys knew what it was all about, right enough.

There was only one thing, I realised, that they didn't know. They didn't know the theodolite was a good god, not a nasty wicked god like the crocodile god and the rushing-river god and the sleepy-sickness god.

'Kintampo!' I cried out. 'Assampa, Mark, get me the four empty gin-bottles!'

They went to my tent, got the bottles, brought them over to me. Already the shadow was lifting, a light was coming into their eyes. Four empty gin-bottles! That's kindness in these parts! That's the benign fetish!

'Get tie-tie!' I ordered. String was brought. 'Tie him bottles here, here, here!' They tied a bottle each to each of the three legs, and a fourth to the projecting screw in the theodolite base. By now the thunder was receding, the lightning flickered hardly at all. The anger of the gods was receding toward the northward heavens. 'Get flowers!' I cried. 'Plenty flowers!'

The boys brought flowers.

'Tie round!' I ordered.

They tied festoons of flowers. My drab old theodolite looked like the May Queen.

There was singing and dancing—not too much of it, for I wanted to get going.

'Stop!' I cried.

They stopped as one man.

'To your packs!'

They went to their packs, but, before loading up, one and all they stood waiting there, waiting until I decided to whom the honour should fall to be the bearer of Big God Theodolite, and him flowers, and him gin-bottles, him four empty gin-bottles.

'You, Luke!' I said lordlily, for, after all, he was a grandfather. He bent down, and kissed my boots and with infinite reverence his friends helped Big God Theodolite on to his back.

So we set forth, the four empty gin-bottles clinking musically. I ought to add we made it. I mean it was our expedition that made the diamond-alluvial on the bend of the river below Kwenta. My Dutch friend, Willem, was a good day's trek behind us. He was a teetotaller. He had no gin-bottles to help him out, full or empty.

December First Story : *Highflyer's Last Stage* by Philip Spring.

The Wild Heart

*Now the rough backs steam the byre,
Now the badger warms his set,
Wild young nights of summer fire
Comfort-loving hearts forget.*

*But the wind has many voices,
Messengers the timbers fret.
Tameness by the hearth rejoices—
Let the wild-heart, too, forget.*

*Stormy wood for pity's sake
Pester not that roving vein,
Windy sky and moody lake
Do not bid me forth again!*

*Comes a whistle from the trees,
Something beckons by the pool:
'Yhou-oo-oo shall never know your ease—
Vagabond and freedom's fool.'*

EGAN MACKINLAY.

Cambrai Day

The Early Days of the Royal Tank Corps

Major J. A. COGHLAN, M.C.

THIS year for my birthday a dutiful daughter gave me a tie, the tie of the Royal Tank Corps. It is a quiet tie enough and may be worn without offence by a gentleman of some years. Brown, red, and green are the colours, and they commemorate the motto of the corps: 'Through the mud, through the blood, into the green fields beyond'. It is of the early days of the Tank Corps I would write, no documented history indeed but a personal memoir.

When the dreadful slaughter of the Somme battles in 1916 ended, leaving us in the wilderness that had been Desire Trench and Hohenzollern Redoubt, 'browed off' is a mild term to express the feelings of the junior infantry officers. Our comrades were dead or wounded and conditions in the line, where we held precariously to the steps of a few flooded German dugouts, appalling. We had given our best against the barbed-wire and the deadly machine-gun and during that terrible winter the thought was ever in our minds that our type of warfare offered no future.

A few days before the end of the year my company came back to Brigade reserve outside Albert. Due to uncooked food and the inescapable cold and dampness, we were all plagued with bowel trouble. I was lying on my bed one afternoon in very poor spirits, when, to my surprise, a Major from the General Staff entered my hut. He assured himself of my name, said he came with the permission of my Colonel, and asked me if I would consider a transfer to the Heavy Branch, Machine-Gun Corps. My first reaction was that here was a chance to wear spurs, which I then believed would greatly enhance my appearance, but the Staff Officer hinted that officers would be mounted on

motor-cycles. The new formation was rather secret, he added, and he could not give me any details. I agreed to let my name go forward, and forgot the incident.

Early in the New Year we were trudging back to the line when a battalion runner stopped me and handed me orders to report immediately to Headquarters, H.B., M.G.C., at St Pol. With some qualms at forsaking my comrades to the misery of the sodden trenches, I said good-bye, collected my kit, and rode to the railhead. At St Pol I learnt with some astonishment that I had volunteered to serve with the Tank Corps. The four original companies which had taken the first tanks to France in 1916 were being expanded to four battalions, and I was posted to Coy. 11, 'D' Battalion.

We were a pretty mixed lot—English, Scots, Irish, and a few from overseas, practically all infantry, though one had been Regimental Sergeant-Major of the 4th Dragoon Guards and had drawn his sabre against the Uhlans before Mons. The junior officers had smelt powder and learnt the lesson that, in battle, plans are more than likely to miscarry. On the other hand, the senior officers were not battlewise and had come mainly from those redundant oddments that a great army inevitably creates. Perhaps my criticism is harsh, but it did appear that they sought personal prestige rather than efficiency and never felt able to point out to the High Command that a suggested operation was unwise or impossible.

WE were now the Tank Corps, but we had no tanks to play with. We got to know each other, did exercises on the six-pounder gun and the internal-combustion

engine, a severe mental strain in those days for a class which did not readily grasp the mechanics of a wheelbarrow. We practised manoeuvres with dummy tanks. Somewhere in the background there was a nautical flavour, for I remember the terms 'line ahead' and 'line abreast', while 'starboard' and 'port' were commonly used.

January and February passed and still there was no sign of our longed-for weapons. In March the preparations for the great Arras offensive were obvious, and we were given to understand that our company would go into action. Maps were issued showing our combat section to be opposite Bullecourt. Tank parks were marked out and forward oil-dumps prepared.

At last came the news that our tanks had arrived in France and would be railed direct to Beaurain some ten miles behind the line. There the company would take them over and move forward to the attack. At that moment I was smitten by a secret weapon—German measles, and only recovered in time to take part in the battle, perhaps fortunately, as a spectator.

To furnish soldiers with a strange untried weapon and send them straight into battle does not appear a very intelligent procedure, but the company was eager and hurried forward to Beaurain. There on the night of April 1st, a suitable date, the long train bearing twelve tanks for 11 Company crept into the siding. All through the hours of darkness the inexperienced crews toiled to drive the unwieldy monsters down the ramps. Dawn came with the task unfinished, but driving snow and sleet made concealment possible, and eventually the tanks were off the train.

Now occurred the first major mishap. In those days the gun-turrets—sponsons—as they were known to us, were detached from the tanks during transit by rail to avoid complications with bridges and tunnels. They had to be lifted by crane off the wagons and bolted to the tank. The loading had been careless, and it was found that tank and sponsons from the same wagon did not belong. In short, the bolt-holes did not coincide. Fitters arrived from the workshops, new holes were bored and cut, and in bitter weather the work was completed by the 6th of April. The attack was fixed for the 9th and already the artillery preparation had commenced. By night the Company moved forward to the line. Mech-

anical breakdowns were frequent, direction tapes were lost in the snow, and it soon became obvious that we would not reach our assault positions in time. The attack was postponed till the 10th, and the angry Australians withdrew from their advanced posts.

With great difficulty the tanks with their exhausted crews deployed in no-man's-land opposite Bullecourt and at dawn on the 10th launched their attack. Down hill and with a favourable wind those old machines could make three miles an hour, while they had to come to a stop to alter direction. They were silhouetted starkly on the white background of snow, and the German gunners greedily accepted the chance. Quickly the range was found, and one could see the heavy shells fall close in front, behind, and beside the targets. In a few minutes eight of the ten tanks in action received direct hits. At that time the main petrol-supply was placed inside and the doors were mere manholes. Five of the tanks were burnt out and there were no survivors. Two staggered on over the hostile trenches and were lost to view and subsequent history. The whole attack ended in a bloody repulse.

11 Company withdrew to reform and refit. This time we received an improved version of the Mark IV model. The petrol-tank was placed outside and the doors were larger and more accessible. We received the tanks at an early date at our training-ground and practised gunnery and manoeuvres. We became reasonably efficient and recovered hope and confidence in our weapons. In those days we were allowed to choose our own names for our tanks. I recall one shrewd officer calling his tank 'Johnny Walker', with the motto 'Still going strong'. He informed the well-known firm of his intention, hoping it had no objection, and duly received a case of Black Label for his consideration. My own youthful ardours strayed to the stars on the London stage. I named my tank 'Teddy Gerard' after a lady who was then delighting Town, and hoped to pursue the opening move. Alas, an unromantic High Command issued the order that 'His Majesty's Land Ships should not be named after stars on the light variety stage' and directed that my tank should be named 'Damon'. To this day I am hazy about Damon and his fame. I believe he had one friend.

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In July came the great Passchendaele offensive and we moved forward as part of the 'Army of Pursuit'. That grandiose name was forgotten in a few weeks. The heavens opened, the massive artillery preparation smashed the dykes and drains, and at once the salient was turned into a dreadful morass. No vehicular movement was possible except along the overburdened roads, and these were ranged to an inch by the German gunners. The offensive degenerated into a daily struggle for farmhouses and strong-points and the 2nd and 5th armies bled to death. My battalion was frittered away piecemeal in minor attacks against selected objectives and for high losses in tanks and crews gained some slight successes.

At last on the 9th of October came my first chance of engaging the enemy in a tank. The task allotted to 11 Company was formidable—to clear the ruins of Poelcapelle, capture Vlamartinge, and carry the ridge of Passchendaele. The tactical plan was childish. 11 Company was to attack from St Julien, driving across the front to Poelcapelle on a road that was plainly shown on the map but was nearly invisible on the ground. We were to enter Poelcapelle at dawn and again to cross the front on a diagonal road to Vlamartinge in full view of the German gunners on the ridge. The roads were clearly marked by the rows of the stumps of the poplar-trees and offered the easiest of targets. Even to our uncritical acceptance of any chance for distinction the prospect looked grim.

I had the honour of commanding the leading tank. We moved out of St Julien on a night of pitiless rain. No lights could be shown as our route lay close to and across the hostile front, but our telltale exhausts must have interested the enemy. Any deviation from the road was fatal, as the tanks would inevitably sink in the surrounding swamp. Each officer led his tank on foot, sometimes going forward to test the immediate surface, sometimes clinging to the tow-ring to avoid being caught by the swinging monsters as they plunged from shell-hole to shell-hole. Fallen tree-trunks became a nightmare. In an early attempt to cross one, it swung viciously, and my tank swung in sympathy. We were ditched by the roadside and only with much labour and the loss of our precious

unditching-gear did we get clear. Thereafter all trunks were removed from our pathway by hand and under indirect machine-gun fire which swept the road. Much delay was caused. It was a terrible night of toil and frustration. Dawn was already breaking as we reached the outskirts of Poelcapelle, a mere five miles from our starting-point at St Julien. Captain Skinner who commanded the leading section joined me for the assault, and as our barrage fell with fury on the enemy lines I passed through the drenched storm groups of the infantry. At last I had brought my tank into action.

At that moment we received a direct hit through the starboard sponson. The massive engine which occupied the centre of the tank shielded me in the officer's seat from the blast, but the petrol from the auto-vac and carburettor was blazing. I heard someone shout: 'Out! Out! Open the door!' A fire-extinguisher was to hand, and though I had never used one before it worked marvellously. The right side of the tank was a shambles and there, mangled almost beyond recognition, lay the bodies of my sergeant and two gunners. Outside, on the lee side, I found the rest of my crew all badly wounded. Skinner who was beside me when we were hit was untouched. My poor driver, Thornton, a mere boy, but a very gallant one, had his arm practically severed near the shoulder, but we recovered our medical aid kit and did our inadequate best to bind up the terrible wound. Fortunately an R.A.M.C. sergeant appeared from nowhere, removed the remains of the arm, and did a most competent piece of work. I was glad to hear later that all the wounded survived. Above all, I blessed the mechanical genius who had thought of putting the main petrol-tank outside.

Down the St Julien road Skinner and I could now see the rest of our tanks immobilised and still being battered by the enemy guns. The infantry were pressing past us towards the first objectives, but our battle was over and the butcher's bill a very heavy one. Skinner was hit as we found our way to the rear.

At that time, though we young officers did not know it, the fate of the young Tank Corps hung in the balance. The High Command was naturally disappointed at the poor results, and one school of thought held

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that persistence in the use of these expensive toys was damaging to the self-reliance of the infantry. Gross tactical mismanagement was the true cause of the failure, held the opposite school. 'Let the Corps fight its own battle according to its own tactical concepts on its own chosen ground, and may the success or failure decide the issue', said the believers in the new weapon. The challenge was accepted and the plan for the Battle of Cambrai conceived and prepared.

There was little time for preparation, for already the winter was approaching. It was decided to attack the famous Hindenburg Line opposite Cambrai with the whole remaining strength of the Corps, and the date was fixed for November the 20th. There was much necessary work to be done. Old tanks—we still had the Mark IV—had to be refitted and crews reformed. Routes from the railheads to the assembly parks had to be surveyed and carefully marked. All, however, was carried out with remarkable efficiency and secrecy, and on the night of the 19th some three hundred tanks crawled forward and took up station outside our wire. There was no artillery preparation, but no-man's-land was wide and the approach of the tanks was

not detected. At 6.20 a.m. our barrage opened on the enemy line and the tanks moved to the attack on a five miles front.

The result made history. The Hindenburg Line, front, support, and reserve, was smashed wide open, while the supporting infantry with practically no loss rounded up 20,000 prisoners. We took a large number of guns, though in the attack on their positions, due to lack of counter-battery fire, we lost heavily.

It is a curious commentary on the detached view of the High Command that the official dispatch announcing the victory gave prominence to the exploit of a German gunner-major who destroyed a number of our tanks at point-blank range rather than to the efforts and heroism of the attacking tank crews.

So unexpected was the victory that there were no supporting troops to exploit the success or even to consolidate the ground won. For my part, my section liberated a young French boy and his aged peasant mother, together with four cows and two pigs. We were at last 'into the green fields beyond'.

Well, I shall wear my tie with pride on Cambrai Day and later drink a silent toast to those few comrades who may be still with us—and to those many who have gone before.

Mutiny at School

ROBERT WOODALL

WHATEVER the critics of the British public school system may find to say about it to-day, they can scarcely stigmatise it, to quote from Lytton Strachey's essay on Dr Arnold, as one of 'anarchy tempered by despotism.' Yet that Strachey's description was no exaggeration is clear when one considers conditions in the public schools during the century or so before and the few decades after 1828, the year in which Dr Arnold began his task of reforming Rugby.

The truth is that by the middle of the 18th century the average public school was conducted more like a barbarian encampment than an educational institution. There were many reasons for this lamentable state of affairs, not the least being that there was always a chronic shortage of masters. One master to 60 or 70 boys was by no means unusual, and it is worthy of note that as late as 1821 there were only five masters at Charterhouse for 431 boys. In these circumstances

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discipline became a matter of continual floggings, and floggings of a kind that prompted the elder Pitt to remark that he 'scarce observed a boy who was not cowed for life at Eton.' It is true that the system of prefectorial government had long been firmly established, but since it was impossible for a handful of masters to exercise continual supervision over hundreds of boys, the consequence of leaving the boys largely to themselves was what one might expect.

For example, in the Long Chamber at Eton, the large and insanitary room in which the 70 Collegers were locked up each evening at 8 p.m. and released for early school in the morning, fighting and bullying were rife. As a result of one fight, the victor, Charles Alexander Wood, stood trial at Aylesbury Assizes for the manslaughter of his opponent, Francis Ashley Cooper, but was acquitted when it was proved that the contest had been conducted strictly in accordance with the rules of prize-fighting. In Long Chamber, moreover, it was not unusual for a small boy to be used as a living football by Sixth Formers who were supposed to keep order, and who, according to Edward Thring, later to become a famous headmaster of Uppingham, were not always sober.

IN these conditions of savagery and indiscipline, which were, with variations, common to all the great schools of the period, it is not surprising that at times the boys' indignation at acts of tyranny on the part of their masters exploded into thoroughgoing mutiny. There was a mutiny at Shrewsbury in 1808 after some senior boys had been flogged for going out of bounds. There was another at Charterhouse in the same year, led by the monitors, who, after being degraded, received what was euphemistically called 'the correction of the school'.

At Winchester there were no fewer than four mutinies between 1770 and 1794. All of them occurred during the headmastership of Dr Warton, dimly remembered now as a minor poet and critic. The immediate cause of the most serious of the mutinies, that of 1794, was Warton's refusal to allow the boys to attend a military band concert in the Cathedral Close. As this was an annual event, which had been popular with Wykehamists for as long as anybody could remember, the boys' anger was such that the Sixth Form was

instructed to lodge a vehement protest with the headmaster. Warton, however, refused to reconsider his decision, so the Sixth Form announced that the school would refuse all duty.

Next morning Warton stayed in his lodgings, the second master, Dr Goddard, being ordered to supervise proceedings in the large school-room. When Goddard entered he was subjected to organised hissing and a heavy bombardment of marbles. He then perceived that the boys were all armed, some with sticks, some with swords, and some even with shot-guns and pistols. Now thoroughly alarmed, Goddard attempted to escape, but the boys forced him to accompany them to the headmaster's lodgings, where both he and Warton were roughly handled and locked up in a room.

Intoxicated by this early success, the boys became completely out of hand. They barricaded themselves in the tower—although not before they had torn up the paving of Chamber Court for use as ammunition if authority should try to dislodge them—hoisted the Red Cap of the French Revolution, and prepared to withstand a siege.

In the end, however, further violence was avoided. Warton managed by some means to escape from his prison and, hastening into the town, was fortunate to meet the High Sheriff of Hampshire in the street. That dignitary readily agreed to return with the headmaster to read the Riot Act, but that his sympathies were not altogether on the side of authority is clear from the fact that when the rebels still refused to surrender he assumed the role of mediator and persuaded them to resume work in return for Warton's undertaking to inflict no punishment.

THE Rugby mutiny of 1797 had, from the point of view of the boys, a less satisfactory ending. It took place during the reign of Henry Ingles, known as 'the Black Tiger', a man notorious even in those days for his addiction to the birch. When he flogged a boy for firing cork bullets in the yard of his boarding-house, the other boys, in protest, broke several windows. Ingles retaliated by ordering the Fifth and Sixth Forms to pay for the damage, but they refused to do so and the younger boys supported them by breaking more windows. Then, after some inflammatory speeches by Sixth Formers, all

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the furniture and wainscoting was dragged out of Big School and smashed to pieces in the Close.

The mutiny might well have dragged on for days, had there not chanced to be in the town a Justice of the Peace, one Butlin, who answered Ingles's call for help by arriving to read the Riot Act at the head of a party of drovers from a near-by horse-fair. The boys received the reading of the Riot Act with boos and catcalls, but, noticing that the drovers carried long whips, retreated to the Island, a plot of ground surrounded by a moat. Unfortunately, the resourceful Butlin had already placed a company of soldiers there, and, realising that whips and bayonets were bound to prevail over sticks and stones, the boys surrendered.

OF the several mutinies at Harrow, two took place because of the boys' insistence that they had a right to be consulted in the choice of a new headmaster. In 1771, on the death of Dr Sumner, the governors appointed an Eton master, Benjamin Heath, instead of Dr Parr, a popular assistant at Harrow. The boys, who 'considered it an indignity to have an Eton assistant put over them', expressed their feelings by smashing up a coach belonging to one of the governors. The inevitable window-breaking then began, and for a few days all Harrow was in confusion. The school was finally sent home for a week, the parents of the ringleaders being politely requested to find another school for their sons; and, in point of fact, a number of them were later translated to Eton.

Thirty-four years later the governors again ignored the boys' wishes by appointing the Rev. George Butler to the headmastership instead of the Rev. Mark Drury. The ensuing mutiny was not as serious as the previous one, but it is worthy of mention now because it was organised and led by Byron, who drew up a plan, which was eventually abandoned, to blow up the school.

AT Eton the Great Rebellion of 1768 broke out because the headmaster, Dr Foster, who was regarded with some contempt by the boys for being the son of a Windsor tradesman, suddenly took away from the Sixth Formers the right of going out of bounds whenever they chose. A meeting of the whole school was

immediately held in the playing-fields, the upshot of which was that the 160 members of the Fifth and Sixth Forms set out on a protest walk to Maidenhead. They stayed the night at an inn there, running up a bill for £55, 18s. 3d., of which £40 was spent on food, and the balance on punch, beer, and the hire of packs of cards.

Next day eighteen of the ringleaders returned to Eton to interview the headmaster, who had been wrongly reported to be willing to negotiate. Foster insisted on unconditional surrender, whereupon some of the ringleaders 'to their eternal infamy, made peace at the expense of their honour.' When the news of the defection was transmitted to the main body at Maidenhead, a panic set in and most of the boys decided to submit, although a few diehards fled home, where they were generally ill received by their parents. Lord Harrington, for example, met his son outside his house and ordered him to go back to Eton at once; while the Marquis of Granby informed his two sons that they could go to the theatre that evening for their pleasure and on the morrow return to Eton to be flogged for his.

Lawlessness was at its height at Eton during the headmastership of Dr Keate, indisputably the greatest flogger who ever reigned over a public school. 'Remember, boys,' he is said to have remarked to a confirmation class, 'you are to be pure in heart or I'll flog you till you are.' No doubt it was the certainty of continual floggings, whether they behaved well or not, that prompted the boys to play so many tricks upon Keate. It was a common practice in chapel to shout him down when he attempted to preach, or to let rats loose in the schoolroom when he was expatiating on the niceties of Ovidian verse.

In 1818, after he had flogged and expelled a popular boy, Keate was hissed and pelted with rotten eggs by the Fifth Form. Furious at this behaviour, he ordered the boys concerned to report to him for a flogging. They conspired together to refuse, so that when the Doctor arrived at the place of execution he found that only one of them had turned up. This youth escaped with a shaking, and sped back to inform his jubilant comrades that their oppressor had at last been forced to concede defeat. They should, however, have realised that Dr Keate was the last man to countenance any form of mutinous behaviour. During the night the remaining 89 boys were

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dragged out of bed by their tutors, taken one by one to Keate's study and soundly flogged.

THE last-recorded mutiny took place at Marlborough, a school which had been founded in 1843 and had rapidly degenerated into one 'which took a new boy, tied him to a bench in the Upper School . . . and branded him with an anchor on the forearm by means of a red-hot poker.' With such brutality a commonplace, it is not surprising that in 1851 Marlburians indulged in an orgy of furniture-smashing and book-burning; nor that, after the mutiny had been suppressed,

the governors decided that a headmaster who had allowed such conditions to develop in a new foundation was not fit to hold his post.

But by this time reform was in the air. Following, in their different ways, the example of Arnold of Rugby, such men as Russell of Charterhouse, Cotton of Marlborough, and many others, infused into their respective schools a wholly new spirit. Soon they became the well-regulated institutions they are to-day, when the idea of mutiny is unthinkable. Yet in the appalling conditions that existed in the 18th and early 19th centuries the wonder is, perhaps, not that there were so many mutinies, but that there were so few.

A Ploughman Speaks

*A plooman chiel cam owre the brae,
His horse were haudan fine,
A cannie pair o' speckled grey
That kent the swingle rein.
The oor was weeran on til dine,
I heard him ca', 'Ha' back.'
He speired the time o' day an' syne
Begoud to gie his crack.*

*'It maks me dowf,' the plooman said,
'To see them biggan here,
There's scarce a rig o' mailin yird
I'll turn anither year.
Ye daurna faut me or I weer
Hoo ony man like me
Can thole the thoct o' buldrie geir
Whaur ance I laboured lea.*

*I bide the back o' Cathkin, man,
I've leaved there aa my days,
Ye'll no get caller air, I ween,
Like what comes owre the braes,
An' whiles I gie my heid a heeze
Whan stoopan to the ploos,
But toons an' Cooncils hae their ways,
They've ta'en the lerroch noo.*

*There's rowth o' fowk in need o' hame,
An' muckle mair to mak,
Be aa that's guid aboot the scheme
The toons are shifstan back.
But here, I'll hae to ca' my crack,
I'll ploos the tither airt,
There's juist ae thing they canna' tak,
An' that's a plooman's hert.'*

E. B. RAMSAY.



The Meads

J. PETERSON

GUNNARSAY, in the far north, had once been famous for its haddock-fishing. Gunnarsay boats; Gunnarsay men; Gunnarsay haddocks—who had not heard of them! Then had come the trawlers, doing untold harm to Gunnarsay and its fishermen. These hardworking islanders sought recompense in herring-fishing. They converted their sail-boats to motor, and when the herring-fishing also declined, they adopted the seine-net and by going farther afield returned to haddock-fishing. In this period of rapid transition a new generation of fishermen had replaced the old and the old-time line-fishing on traditional fishing-grounds, with all its attendant lore centuries old, had become a thing of the past.

None deplored the change more than Hakki, who, as a boy, had known the haddock-fishing in its heyday. Not that it brought much money to the men who pursued it so energetically, but it had bequeathed them a name—fishermen of the first order, tough, hardy, weatherwise, and supremely successful—and they had lived up to it. They were known up and down the coast, the men of Gunnarsay.

Nowadays, men went to sea in comfort, in boats built for power and speed, able to with-

stand bad weather if they met it. Radio gave them weather forecasts; direction-finding apparatus and echo-sounding meters told them where they were and what kind of bottom they were over; with their radiotelephones they could speak whenever they chose to their own firesides. Well-happied in such luxuries, what need had they for the encyclopædic fishing lore their forefathers had preserved so assiduously—the multitudinous meads, or cross-bearings, by which every small scrap of fishing-ground could be refished at will? They just turned to their new-fangled gadgets, and if these gave indications of fish, they fished, unmindful of their ancestors' treasure-store of knowledge.

Perhaps it wasn't quite so easy as that, but that was how Hakki chose to represent it when his thoughts turned to past glories. Secretly he was not unaware of the challenge that faced the younger generation, nor was he untouched by a sense of pride in their responses to it. But it pleased him to have a sly dig at these young men with their fine boats, their mysterious mechanisms and fantastic mortgages. And it was with perhaps a combination of feigned ridicule and a trace of cynical self-criticism that he recounted the tale of the Meads.

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Hakki spoke in his native Gunnarsay dialect, with its strange selective pronouns and soft inflexions, employing vowel sounds quite beyond the scope of the English language, all of which gave an expressiveness and a salty tang to his narrative, which was not unduly hard to follow, but impossible to convey by any written word. So I will forgo the impossible, and seek refuge in the translation to which one naturally resorted while listening to Hakki's soft voice and watching the faint ripple of laughter which would momentarily steal across his tanned and rugged countenance.

IN Gunnarsay there was a boy who had a great notion in going to the haddock-fishing, but he was blind, so that unlike almost all Gunnarsay boys he had never been able to go to the fishing. And there was an old, old man, Andrew, who had been at the fishing all his days, but he, too, was blind, and could no longer go to the fishing.

One day the boy came to the old man, and said: 'Andrew, I've gotten a haddock-line. If I bait her, will you come and shoot her?'

And Andrew just shook his head sadly, not so much for his own blindness, or the boy's blindness, as for the blindness of the young men of Gunnarsay, and the blind days folk were now doomed to live in, and then reluctantly replied: 'It's no use shooting a haddock-line if you don't know the meads.'

'But nobody knows the meads better than you do,' argued the boy.

'True,' agreed the old man. 'If the Gunnarsay men knew the meads half as well as I do, they would still be catching the best haddocks in the sea; but no one should know better than you that a man must see the meads to shoot lines. So it's no use you and me even attempting to go to the haddocks.'

This seemed to dispose of the project once and for all, but the boy had set his mind upon going, and after a silence he said: 'Andrew, what about lame Willie Erterson? He can see, and he can row. If you tell him where to go, he can take us to the meads, and you can shoot the line.'

'Lame Willie Erterson! Boy, lame Willie Erterson's a half-wit—that's why he never got to the fishing.'

'But he can row, and he can see,' pleaded the boy, 'so why shouldn't we go?'

'All right,' said Andrew, relenting. 'I know meads not far away. Bait you your line, and I'll bait mine, and we'll get lame Willie Erterson and go to the haddocks in the morning.'

NEXT morning there was alarm and consternation. The women and bairns and old men of Gunnarsay—for all the young men were away at sea—saw the blind man, the blind boy, and, hirling beside them, lame Willie Erterson, the half-wit, carrying their lines and setting out for the sea just as the Gunnarsay men used to do in the days when Gunnarsay was Gunnarsay. Some laughed to hide their embarrassment, others were frankly indignant at such an absurd spectacle. 'What are we coming to?' they asked. 'Two blind folk and a half-witted cripple going to the sea! They'll drown themselves.'

If the blind man had been other than old Andrew, they would have rushed to remonstrate with him. But Andrew had been skipper of the *Vesper*, a skipper to whom other skippers turned for guidance; and, besides, he had never been the sort of man one would wish to meddle with, even if he were old and blind. So they all held back. And Andrew's boat was launched. The blind boy sat forrard; lame Willie took the oars amidships; and old Andrew sat aft with the lines beside him. With the lift of the sea under his foot, long dormant fishing instincts were stirring up within Andrew: once more he was in charge of a boat on the sea. 'Row off, Willie, till you get the Green Head over Lowra Skerry.'

'Right,' said Willie, with enthusiasm, pretending, as so many half-wits do, that he knew what he was doing, though in fact he knew neither the Green Head nor Lowra Skerry. He rowed away energetically while Andrew got the lines and buoys and sinkers ready. And the blind boy just sat, breathing in the smell of the sea, absorbed in the caressing motion of the waves and the all-engrossing realisation that he was on his way to the fishing-grounds.

Very soon the lame oarsman began to tire of so much labour. He was not even heading in the direction of any known fishing-grounds, so finally, resting on his oars, he said with an air of achievement: 'Now then.'

'Is the Green Head over Lowra Skerry?' demanded Andrew.

'Aye,' said Willie, with emphasis.

'All right then, head now for the southard, and keep the Green Head where it is until you bring the Burga Stack south of the Head of Howan.'

Again Willie rowed, and again he began to tire, and at last, with no knowledge of what or where the Head of Howan might be, he finally stopped with a very convincing: 'Now then.'

'Now then,' repeated Andrew, rising to his feet, 'row to the southard, and keep the Green Head dead on Lowra Skerry.'

'Dead on,' echoed Willie, and resumed rowing.

EVERYTHING was going marvellously. Andrew began to shoot the lines. He threw over the buoy, paid out the buoy-rope, then, carefully easing the sinker over the gunwale, began to flick out the baited hooks with a rhythm that bespoke the master-hand in action. Only the Gunnarsay men ever shot lines like that. At regular intervals he would inquire if the Green Head was still over Lowra Skerry—everything depended upon that—and always Willie would respond with a reassuring: 'Dead on.'

And the people of Gunnarsay stood watching.

'Bairns, bairns, what a pitiful sight,' said one woman. 'Who ever heard tell of shooting lines off the Ness Point! Never a tail will they catch there.'

'Poor old Andrew,' bemoaned another, 'I never thought to see him come to this.'

And while they bewailed the sad infirmities of blindness, mental deficiency, and old age, the shooting went on like clockwork. With only half-a-line to go, Andrew, still reminding Willie not to stray from the all-important meads, proposed that when he came to the last hook Willie would pick up the sinker, tied to the line and lying at his feet, and drop it over while Andrew would deal with the buoy-rope.

Unfortunately, Willie, failing to appreciate the precautionary nature of this direction, picked up the sinker and threw it overboard without more ado. Away it sped, for it was several pounds weight, entangling what was left of the baited hooks with the buoy-rope,

now racing out, a most ignominious finale to Andrew's star performance.

Realising immediately what had happened, Andrew, in complete disgust, seized the buoy and without even waiting to spit on it for luck sent it hurtling after the sorry mess. Instead of that last portion of the line lying along the bottom where the haddocks feed, it was streaming upwards entangled with the buoy-rope, until some of the hooks were as near the buoy floating on the surface as they were to the bottom.

I often marvelled that they ever found the first buoy again, but find it they did, whether by chance or by some slight glimmer of intelligence on the part of lame Willie Erterson, I cannot say. After some manœuvring, Andrew got the buoy on board and began to heave up the sinker. As it came overside it was accompanied, on the very first hook, by a haddock—a large, fat haddock.

'Look, look at the fish,' shouted lame Willie.

Neither of his companions saw, but Andrew, blind to the ghostly white procession advancing upon the boat as the line came up out of the green wavering depths, could feel the great catch, seeing them in his mind's eye as clearly as if he had been peering down at fish upon fish, haddock upon haddock, one on every hook. The blind boy felt a strange tingling down his spine: they were catching haddocks.

Andrew stood swinging each fish clear of the gunwale, deftly unhooking it and dropping it into the bottom of the boat. Prime haddocks, the far-famed Gunnarsay haddocks, dozen upon dozen of them. The boat began to sink lower in the water. And when, at last, they came to the end of the line, that dismal tribute to a half-wit's stupidity, there they hung, fish over fish over fish, haddocks festooned in a shining sequence along the buoy-rope halfway to the surface.

At last, everything on board, Andrew drew himself to his full height. He was always a tall man, but he seemed suddenly to have gained in stature. The fish piled about his knees, their weight pressing against the yielding legs of his long rubber boots, his face alight with exertion, excitement, and success. 'Boys,' he laughed triumphantly, 'what did I tell you? The Gunnarsay men could catch haddocks yet—if they only knew the meads.'

Bird-Fancier

M. BARRON

TED BROWN'S eyes lingered over the small advertisement in his morning newspaper. He read again. 'WANTED IN EXCHANGE FOR CANARY, GENTLEMAN'S SUIT IN GOOD CONDITION. GOOD HOME ONLY.' Slowly he turned the page to read the rest of the news, but he didn't read it after all. Instead, he paused to speculate on the reason a person might have for making and expecting this ill-adjusted exchange. There was more in this than met the eye, he decided, and something about the small advertisement vaguely disturbed him. There was an urgency about its very briefness which gripped his imagination. He didn't know much about canaries himself. He liked them, of course; thought they looked nice in other people's homes, but in terms of cash-value—well, he would have judged that a good suit was worth much more than a canary. And then the idea occurred to him that the canary would be of great value to the owner, not in a material way, but in the way one values a pet, and that the advertiser was having to part with the bird from sheer necessity. It was all clear to him now. It was the unknown human distress between the lines which was disturbing him. Oh well, he hoped the canary would find a good home, and somehow he felt that its owner deserved to get a suit.

Ted wasn't an impetuous man. He had a kind heart, but he knew better than to let it rule his life, so he tried to forget about the little advertisement and went off to his office. But the advertisement didn't let him forget, and he kept thinking about it all day as he worked.

When he came home at night he went straight to his wardrobe and took a quick look through his suits. Yes, there was the one he had in mind—that black-and-white check. He had bought it at the time of the International Exhibition in the Kelvingrove Park in 1901, and that was three years ago. But

he hadn't worn it much—only on summer evenings and holidays. He fingered it carefully. The material was good—too good to give away to a complete stranger in exchange for a canary. Nevertheless, he found himself taking the suit off the peg and going through to the kitchen, where his wife was preparing a meal, and saying to her, in a casual kind of way, just as if he did this kind of transaction every day: 'Mary, I am giving this suit away in exchange for a canary'. He felt somewhat foolish and expected some opposition.

Instead, his wife looked up from her cooking and said: 'Oh, that one. I never liked it. It's too conspicuous. I could spot you a mile away in that check. I've often felt like handing it away myself. A canary will be cheery about the house, if it can whistle. But who are you giving the suit to?'

Ted told her about the advertisement.

She was interested, but it evidently did not upset her peace of mind. All she added was: 'There was a cap to match that suit. Why don't you give it away, too?'

Ted's conscience troubled him no more and he got ready to write his reply to the advertisement.

And so it came about that one day a small wooden box was delivered at his door—a small box with holes in it and with a red-and-white label wrapped around it which read: 'LIVESTOCK WITH CARE'.

RIGHT from the beginning Ted had a natural faculty in handling the canary. After he had carefully removed it from the little box he held it in his long gentle hands. At first the little bird fluttered nervously and then lay perfectly still, watching with its bright little eyes while Ted stroked its soft feathered head. Suddenly Ted paused and examined the bird's head closely. Then he

called sharply to his wife: 'Mary, I've been done. The bird's a fraud.'

His wife hurried to his side.

'Look,' he said, 'there's a hole in its head.'

They stood looking at the hole, aghast. Then common-sense came quickly to Mary. 'Will that not be the bird's ear?' she asked.

'You're right,' said Ted, feeling thoroughly mortified by his display of ignorance, and yet relieved, too, that the bird was all right. 'I'd better learn something about canaries before starting to keep one,' he laughed. So he popped the canary into the new cage which he had all ready for its arrival, put drinking-water in its bowl, and went out of the house in search of a shop which could sell him books about birds. At the station-bookstall he got what he wanted, and also a weekly paper which was devoted entirely to cage-birds. That was the beginning of Ted's hobby, and it was to bring him great pleasure and interest.

TED and his family became very attached to the little bird and soon presented it with a mate for company. By spring the birds were the proud parents of several little fluffy yellow birds and Ted had become an enthusiastic bird-fancier. He started to make friends with other bird-fanciers and to exchange young birds of his with young birds of theirs. Time went on and soon he found himself with so many birds that he removed to a larger house with two very big attics, which he turned into aviaries.

By now he was breeding very, very good birds and was recognised by other breeders as a very capable judge, so much so that he was asked by societies all over the country to judge the best birds at their shows. He exhibited his own birds at all the bigger shows and was constantly winning prizes with them.

Certain preparations had to be made before the birds went off in all their glory to be judged, and the first of these was the preparing of the show-cages. These were square, wooden all over except for the wire front, and Ted nearly always gave them a fresh coat of paint before each show. His colour-scheme was designed to set the bird's good points off to advantage. The cages would be put aside to dry, and later in the week preparations were made for the canaries' bath-night.

The way Ted bathed his birds was very satisfactory. First, he made certain there was a good bright fire in the kitchen-grate and that all

the doors were kept shut to prevent draughts. The birds to be washed were already in a large cage in the kitchen, and Ted's children, who loved this bath-night, were already seated near the fire and keeping just as quiet as they could so as not to frighten the birds.

Ted placed two chairs in front of the fire to support a wooden plank, about a yard long, which he placed on top of the chairs. On the plank, to warm, he laid half-a-dozen large, white, Indian silk napkins, which a friend had given him and which he now found ideal for his purpose. He then placed the kitchen-table in the centre of the floor and opened up both side leaves to give himself plenty of working-space. On the table he placed three dishes, part of an old-fashioned dinner-set which his wife no longer used. They comprised a large soup tureen and two oval vegetable-dishes. These he filled with warm water and beside them he placed a small soap-dish with a piece of transparent soap and a man's shaving-brush.

All this time the canaries in the kitchen were whistling merrily and trying to outdo each other in length and strength of song. But now it was time for the bath, and Ted opened the door of the cage and gently withdrew the first little fellow. The birds were never afraid with Ted, and this one lay quietly in his hand while he dipped the shaving-brush in the water in the large soup tureen, soaped it, and then gently brushed it over the little feathered body. Then he changed over to the second dish of water and rinsed off all the soap, and then to the third, for the final rinse.

By now the canary did look queer, with its feathers all wet and clamped closely to its sides. Ted quickly opened one of the soft Indian silk napkins and carefully wrapped the canary in it. At this, Ted's own little girls became quite maternal, for the canary looked exactly like a very little baby in a shawl. He next placed the bird gently on the wooden plank in front of the fire and went on with the washing of bird number two. And all this time the other birds whistled gaily.

At first the little newly-washed bird lay perfectly still until it felt the warm comfort of the fire penetrate through its little shawl to its feathers. It would then make a small 'Cheep, cheep', and move a little within the napkin. As soon as the second bird was wrapped up and in front of the fire, Ted would gradually unwind the napkin from the first and put the bird in a cage a little back from the fire, but

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still near enough to get the heat. The bird would shake its feathers, and they would gradually fluff up prettily, and in no time at all the canary would be singing away merrily with those still to be washed, and feeling ever so clean and comfortable.

NEXT day the birds would be put in their show-cages, placed in a large box which had been specially made for them, and sent by rail to wherever the bird show was being held. Ted's children waited eagerly for the return of the box and nearly always went to the station to meet it. Ted would hire a cab, horse-drawn, for taxis were scarcely yet in fashion, and they would drive home through the then cobbled streets. They never could decide whether they wanted the journey to last long, or whether to drive home quickly to see if the birds had won any prizes. In that they were seldom disappointed. Sometimes a particularly good bird had won several first prizes

and the prize for being the best bird in the show. Others had first, second, or third awards. If one little canary hadn't done as well as the others and could only show a highly-commended ticket, the children would be sad for him, but Ted would say: 'Oh, never mind. He's a good bird, but he's young. He'll do better next year.' And by now, when it came to canaries, Ted knew what he was talking about.

There was something else, and Ted pondered on it often as he sat quietly in his spare moments watching his birds and thinking on the man whose little agony advertisement had first harrowed him into fancying canaries. If Ted required a replacement to his wardrobe he never had to advertise his birds. There was a ready market, and his birds could fetch high prices—more than enough to buy him a good new suit. But it wasn't the only thing he had in common with the fellow, this acquiring of a new suit. Ted never sold a bird without the mental reservation: 'GOOD HOME ONLY'.

Twenty Years Under the Sea

IV.—Underwater Fishing

C. A. CHARD

SINCE my wrestle with a shark,* many people have asked me what other underwater encounters I have had with fish. To be candid, I have had more fun than frights during my twenty years of deep-sea diving, but of all the many fish I have met down below I dislike conger-eels most. Congers are particularly fond of secreting themselves in the waste-pipes of sunken ships, and I have been startled so many times by the sudden appearance of a conger at the mouth of a pipe that nowadays I take care to tap all pipes in the

region of my work before settling down to a job.

My first encounter with a conger took place on the Casement job.† I was new to diving then, and no thought of congers disturbed my mind as I found a footing on the sand beside the wreck of the *Aud*. As I approached the ship, I noticed something moving in the mast-sheath, and there came gliding out of the hole a huge conger-eel. Let me admit at once that under water everything is slightly magnified. Allowing for this, I estimate that the conger was about eight feet long and as thick as my

* See *Chambers's Journal* for August 1956.

† See *Chambers's Journal* for October 1956.

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thigh—in the thickest part of its body, of course.

Attracted, no doubt, by the bubbles rising from the exhaust-valve of my helmet, the big fish swam slowly towards me. I decided to remain where I was. Slowly, so as not to annoy the conger by sudden movement, I unsheathed my diver's knife and, realising that my bare hands were particularly vulnerable, and possibly capable of carrying a scent to the conger, I put them behind my back. The conger approached in leisurely fashion and reared itself up on its tail like a cobra about to strike. I took a firmer grip of my knife and waited tensely. With the conger's horrid head only a foot away from the glass of my helmet, I stared for what seemed an age into its ophidian eyes. I would not care to assert that the human eye has any power over fish, but some instinct warned me not to blink or shift my gaze during this queer staring match. Eventually I outstared the conger. The brute lowered its head and swam slowly away into the blue haze.

Since then while at work on wrecks I have seen many congers, and have even tried to catch them, but it is practically impossible to catch a conger under water. They swim slowly, but grasping them with the hand is useless, because they can wriggle through the tightest human grip with the greatest of ease. The only way to get a conger under water is to wait beside a pipe you have tapped. Then as soon as the conger pokes its head out to see what the disturbance is about, the trick is to stab him in the back with your diver's knife.

CRABS are fairly easy to catch. A small net dropped over them is sufficient to render them helpless. Another method is to turn the crab on its back and twist a lanyard about its claws.

Lobsters are full of tricks, and they give the impression that they possess intelligence. You cannot get behind a lobster; it will always face the enemy, its claws poised for action. A lobster will watch the diver with its stalky eyes and allow him to approach within a certain distance. Then, with a powerful flick of its springy tail, the creature will jump backwards a yard or so and await developments. A lobster is prepared to play this game indefinitely, but the diver, although his patience may be endless, is limited by the length of his lifeline. The lobster seems to know when you have reached the end of your tether. It makes

no attempt to increase the distance, but just watches and waits like a cat that is safe on a wall above a yapping dog.

To catch a lobster, it is essential to drive the crustacean into a corner. In reverse gear, a lobster can move like lightning, but its forward gait is just a clumsy shuffle. Even when a lobster has been cornered it is still no easy matter to catch it. You have to slip your hand behind waving pincers that can move fast and possess sufficient strength to amputate a finger. People may tell you that a lobster is perfectly harmless once you have grasped its body. Don't believe it. I have known a lobster to press its elbows into its sides in an attempt to trap my fingers.

SKATE and rays can be caught quite easily by a diver. The difficult part of the problem is the initial step of finding the fish. These species rely on protective colouring and immobility to escape attention. To a deep-sea diver, the skate is worse than a banana-skin to a pedestrian. Often enough I have slipped on an unseen skate, with the result that my feet have shot out from under me, and, once down, it is not always easy for a diver to regain his balance.

Having located your skate, the best way to catch it is by using a barbed spear to which a line is attached. By itself, the spear is not much good, because the skate is a living suction-cup and is able to cling to the sea-floor with surprising tenacity. With your free hand you scrape away the mud or sand under the skate to break the suction. Then you twist the free end of the line round the barb of the spear where it projects through the fish, and he is yours.

BY way of experiment, I have, on several occasions, taken a fishing-line down with me, baited the hook, and fished from the bottom of the sea, with the special advantage of being able to see everything that happens to the bait. Strangely enough, I have never caught anything except crabs. Fish are extraordinarily cautious in approaching a bait. They inspect it from all angles. Although I have attracted many fish with a piece of bait, not one has ever taken it. Possibly my air-bubbles made them suspicious.

Speaking of air-bubbles, their effect on a shoal of mackerel or pollack is curious. A

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diver always knows when a shoal of fish is passing over his head by the sudden diminution of light, comparable to the passing of a cloud over the face of the sun. The effect is rather eerie in the blue depths of the sea, where the light is none too good at the best of times. As the shoal approaches the stream of air-bubbles, it splits to avoid them, half the shoal bearing left and the other half bearing right. Some distance on, the shoal comes together again, leaving a diamond-shaped wedge of 'sky' around the bubbles.

It is a matter of surprise to me that anglers are able to catch fish with worms. From my underwater observations fish never seem to feed on anything but smaller fish. Presumably the smallest fish feed on plankton, but as soon as they are large enough to swallow other fish they rapidly wean themselves to a cannibal diet. Occasionally I have seen fish nibbling at weed, but not often enough to say that 'vegetables' form a regular part of a fish's diet.

While working at Scapa Flow I witnessed the unusual sight of an angler-fish at work. This hideous brute, nearly all head, and the head nearly all mouth, was half-submerged in the soft bottom. A 'fishing-rod' projected from the top of its head. This ended in a flesh lure, not unlike a worm, and the angler-fish was able to move this excrescence as though it were a separate live entity. When a fish inspects the bait, the angler-fish gradually withdraws it until the apparent worm is just over its wide-open mouth. The fish smells the bait all round and eventually places itself right in the angler-fish's mouth. One quick snap terminates the proceeding. The angler-fish's mouth is lined top and bottom with seven rows of sharp teeth, all slanting toward its throat. These teeth mean one-way traffic only.

The diving-bird known as a shag, or cormorant, is a fine underwater fisherman. Using its wings as fins, this little bird darts about under the surface with remarkable agility. It has to be faster than the fish it preys on, otherwise it would go hungry. If there are

any fish about, a shag rarely returns to the surface without having caught something.

ONE job I had in Falmouth Harbour yielded a lot of fish, although the method used was not in the strict Waltonian tradition. We were breaking up some captured German submarines by exploding charges of gelignite under water. Each explosion stunned a number of fish and while we were waiting for the water to clear, so that I could go down to inspect the result of the explosion, our boat cruised round picking up a hundredweight or so of wrasse, pollack, soles, flounders, and so on, leaving the small fry to be quarrelled over by the screaming gulls.

My last fishing story goes back to the Case-ment job. Just before my first dive down to the *Aud* the topside men besieged me with requests for fish to be sent up to vary their diet. They were certain that at 25 fathoms I should find enough fish to provide the whole crew with a tasty supper. They got their fish, but they were probably the most surprised sailors in the seven seas when, in response to my signal, they drew up a line to which was tied a nice new galvanised bucket containing half-a-dozen tins of herrings in tomato-sauce.

The arms and bombs in the hold of the *Aud* had been thinly camouflaged by a top-layer of galvanised pails and cans of herrings, so that in case of search the cargo would appear to be harmless. When the emergency arose, the captain did not dare to rely on this flimsy device. The warning shot had clearly indicated that any subsequent search would be a thorough one.

At all events, I could not get on with my job until I had cleared out the layer of camouflage, and I could not resist the temptation of sending up the tinned herrings in response to the request for fish. Certainly, I have never since been able to obtain fish under water quite so easily or in such quantity.

Burning Leaves

*White wood scars of autumn pruning
Pit the dark November sky,
Gathered litter leaves are heaving
Softly as they burn and die.*

*In the smoke the broken branches
Wreath again with ghostly may,
Catching up to-morrow's glory
On the threads of yesterday.*

HAZEL TOWNSON.



A Braw Bit o' Grund

MARY P. ROY

SANDY ROBB showing visitors round his domain, the auld kirkyaird, never failed to point out the tomb of Leezbeth McAird, and to bemoan the fact that there no grass would ever grow. 'It's as true as ocht! The weetest simmer we ever had an' that grave was as yella as a dandelion! But what wad ye? Ye ken she dune't hersel'. Ou ay! A braw heidstane, nae doobt—"The beloved wife o' Andra McAird"—an' a' the rest o't! But, ma man, the polisman gruppit her on the bracheid yont the toon wi' the buit on her—ay, ae single buit belangin' tae Sandy Wylie the cobbler below her dolman! Ae single buit, mind ye, nae neibour tul't! An the bobby he says til her, says he: "Gie me that buit at ance. Ma wumman, there'll be a case ower this!" She gied him the buit gey quate like an' gaed awa hame.

'Juist aboot the fower' oors the neibours saw her sherpinin' a breid-knife on the doorstep. The aulder bairns werena' hame frae the schule, an' the youngest kept skirlin' awa till they cam, but naebody peyed ony heed—it wis aye a cankert grumblin' thing at ony rate! Sae the bobby didna get his case efter a'!

'Did she need to steal? Fegs no! Her man was richt weel aff, an' had a guid pickle siller

in the bank. If she had been a duchess, they wad hae ca'ed it kleptomany, but, bein' Leezbeth, it was juist plain stealin'.

'Still anon her family cam on nae sae bad. They say that a' the lassies had a deevil o' a temper. Ane o' them mairried on Sam'l Ferguson, an' here's his bit o' grund!'

This is where Sandy Robb stepped aside to enjoy your surprise, for on Sam'l Ferguson's 'bit o' grund' was a white marble statue of the sheerest beauty—a slender girlish figure holding a naked baby in its arms. The pose was ordinary enough, but the thing itself was far from ordinary. Something appealing, poignant almost, in the brooding expression of the young face struck to the heart of the observer. So pure it was, so lifelike, so pathetic, that for days afterwards you saw it at every turn—that perfect little cameo of flawless white, with its pensive young mouth and pointed chin, outlined against the green of a willow-tree.

'Ay, it's a braw stane,' said Sandy, 'a rale bonny stane! He got it made in Italy nae less, whaur the marble comes frae, ye ken, an' it's a likeness o' the bit lass hersel'.

'I mind o' her fine, fleecin' along the road tae the schule, wi' her lang yella hair fleecin' ahint her. Puir thing, she was mair rit nae mair nor

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a twalmonth. No muckle mair than a bairn hersel' when she dee'd!

'Leeb's dochter? Na, na? That's no Leeb's dochter ava! This was Sam'l's first! She was a MacPheerson—Sybilla was her name. This ane was a canny cratur, no like Leeb's dochter ava!'

FOLK said that when Sam'l Ferguson buried his first wife he grat ower muckle.

Eppie Morrison, who had seen more people into the world, ay, and out of it, than she ever had bawbees in her pooch, always declared that the greetin' an' sabb'in' bereavit never murn lang, and instanced the historic case of Donald Tosh, who, supported on the arm of his father-in-law at the funeral of his first, was 'winkin' tae his second, Setterday eicht days, comin' hame frae the offis wi' his pay!'

Be that as it may, Sam'l Ferguson was married in two years' time to dark handsome Leeb McAird, and as far as his worldly affairs were concerned his troubles were over.

Leeb was a beauty in her way, which was the exact opposite of Sybilla's. She was a very tall woman, built on the grand scale, with a wealth of dark-brown wavy hair, and an oval face whose irregular features were not without a charm of their own. Her long dark-brown eyes were set under straight jet-black brows which almost met across her nose. The firm mouth closed tightly over strong white teeth.

She made Sam'l an excellent wife. Not a single penny of his income was allowed to go unaccounted for. Before he married her, Sam'l could hardly have told what he did with his money. Did Archie, Tam, Wull, Geordie run short, what was easier than to try on Sam'l? A fine kindly creature, brother Sam'l, easy to borrow from, and not hard to pay back. This year, next year, sometime, never! If his bankbook showed his pecuniary assets to be small, he was rich in good-will. Alas, these days were over, as Archie, Tam, and all the rest of the gay fraternity soon discovered.

Leeb was sternly against lending. Her favourite proverb was that 'the simple man is the beggar's brother.' And, according to her, Sam'l was of all men the most simple, heading straight for the poorhouse. His extravagance was the subject of her daily, nay hourly, lectures, for all the McAirds laid great stress on worldly possessions, being generally at daggers drawn with each other at some period of their existence over the division of Auntie

Bell's goods and chattels, Uncle Eben's grandfather-clock, or the title-deeds of the family grave. So Leeb became keeper of the household purse, chancellor of the family exchequer. Sam'l knew his own weakness.

Only on one occasion did Leeb overstep the mark. Coming home for his dinner one day, Sam'l found her with a sheaf of old receipted bills on a file. 'Ma guidness!' she said, with real horror in her voice. 'Fifty-five pound for that bedroom suite! Guidman, ye shairly had gane clean gyte when ye let yersel' be taen in like that! Daylicht robbery, nae less! Thirty-five wis plenty for't. O' a' the big thieves, that Tam Jamieson is the worst! I wis gaun tae gie him an order for a high-chair for the bairn, bit, efter this, no a black ha'penny o' ma siller does he see!'

'I'm hungry,' said Sam'l plaintively. 'The stuff was pyed for lang syne. Gie me ma denner an' forget auld Tam.'

But Leeb was on her favourite tack. Out came another bill, on strange foreign-looking notepaper this time. 'What's this noo? Losh me! Am I seein' richt? A heidstane! Hunners o' pounds for a heidstane! A heidstane for that wishy-washy cratur! Hunners o' pounds thrown away for useless—'

She got no further. Her quiet, simple, obedient husband was suddenly transformed. His face was red, almost purple, with rage. His eyes blazed with fury. 'Lay that doon this very meenit, ye brazen limmer, ye!' he commanded. 'An' keep her an' her heidstane aff yer ill tongue—or, by Goad, I'll brain ye!'

He was obeyed. Never, until the day she died, did Leeb mention Sybilla's name.

But judge how she hated her memory, and that tombstone which you saw as soon as you entered the cemetery gates, and which haunted you for long after you had left them.

Worse still, Leeb knew, although she would have scorned to tell you how she learned of it, that it was Sam'l himself who planted the flowers in the pretty border round the statue and inside the marble edging. The first and best of his geraniums from his greenhouse, begonias, stocks, and asters all went to the cemetery. More than that, when he stayed behind, ostensibly to chat with the elders at the kirk-door every Sabbath, he invariably visited his bit o' grund before going home.

JEALOUS! Leeb had ached with jealousy for years and she was jealous of the dead.

Often she thought it would have been easier to bear had her rival been a living woman. She could have done something, said a great deal. This silent devotion to the dead got on her nerves. She became sour, taciturn, gloomy.

Never of a happy disposition, she became worse when Jacky died. Jacky was their eldest born, a cheery, happy little fellow of seven. A sudden infection, a brief sharp struggle, and he was gone.

Lang Tam Hume, the professional tear in his eye, was busy about his duties, when he was interrupted by the bereaved mother. 'Whaur wull ye be for pittin' him?' she asked tensely.

Tam looked up in bewilderment. 'Whaur but in yer ain man's grund? There's no a bonnier bit in the hale place, I can tell ye! Ye'll no get a bit like that tae buy noo, no though ye suld gie three times the siller!'

'Never!' said Leeb fiercely. 'What, let ma bairn lie there aside *her*! I'd rather throw him into the harbour, an' jump in ahint him mase!''

Here was a bonny business. Tam sought out Sam'l anxiously for a consultation. They could not conter a bereaved mother. Who knew what she might do! They all remembered her mother's tragic end. Leeb herself looked fit for anything. The tears were wet on her brown cheeks. The great brown eyes were heavy-lidded and swollen with weeping, but the close mouth was tight as ever.

Sam'l touched her gently on the arm. 'Whaur *wad* ye like him tae lie, Leebie? I canna buy mair grund upbye. It wad mak an awfu' spekulation amang the folk.'

Leeb dried her eyes and thought for a moment. 'Whaur are yer faither an' mither laid?' she asked.

'At Cabenha'. But that's an awfu' distance awa.'

'Never mind hoo far it is! Pit Jacky there!'

'I'll hae tae ask ma brither Wull's leave. He has the papers.'

'He's awn ye ower muckle siller tae refuse.'

'Aweel,' Sam'l spoke resignedly. 'I wad fain hae had the laddie putten whaur I micht hae seen the place ilka Sabbath an' plantit a flooer or twa! Bit hae it yer ain wey.'

She had it her own way—and alas for Sam'l, Jacky's was not the only little white coffin he followed up the long steep road to Cabenha'. Five children Leeb bore him, and not one of them lived to grow up.

DEATH had been busy meanwhile among the elders of the Ferguson family. Archie, Tam, Wull, and Geordie, all the gay scapegraces, had been gathered into the same safe haven.

Auld Eleck had long been the sexton at Cabenha'. As the minister rather unnecessarily explained to visitors, he was a character. Long ago he would assuredly have got the road but for the incontrovertible fact that he could not be dispensed with. Only Eleck knew where folk lay who had no heidstanes. There was no plan for the kirkyaird, and, as the minister also said, when Eleck died nobody knew what would happen! Eleck was the third of his family in succession to be gravedigger. He was a bachelor. There would be no more Elecks.

He was a little man with a curiously wrinkled face, a round head as bald as an egg, and a perfectly appalling squint.

He it was who complained peevishly to Sam'l about his family burying-ground. 'I'm never dune dig, diggin' up that grund o' yours! If they wud a' dee at ance an' be dune wi't! But this tearin' up an' layin' doon, every twa or three months! Ma Goad, ay! It doesna gie the gress a chance!'

'Aweel,' ruminated Sam'l, 'I'm shair there's no ane o' them but wad fain hae spared ye the trouble! Weel, weel! I houp yer gress'll get leave tae grow noo!'

But Eleck, watching Sam'l daundering doon the brae, shook his head ruefully. 'I'm sair cheatit,' he said to himself, 'gin that ane'll no be needin' it howked up again afore lang! He's gey failed like. Ma Goad, ay!'

Sam'l's wife Leeb was the last to notice that his health was going. What she did notice was that he was oftener up the brae to visit the bit o' grund with that hated statue. How she longed to deface, spoil, *smash* that calm, faintly smiling face he loved. Not for the first time had she toyed in her mind with the idea.

She herself was greatly changed. Long since she had lost the last trace of her girlish comeliness. The great brown eyes were sunk in furrows. The oval face was now hatchet-shaped, showing sharp angularities at cheek and jaw. Her rather long neck was forever swathed in scarves; she had an income in her throat which bothered her.

Sam'l and she had for a long time been as lodgers in the same house, matter-of-fact companions, who spent many silent hours

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together, neither evincing much interest in the other's doings.

WHEN Sam'l died suddenly, as he had long known he must, Leeb did not appear to be greatly grieved. As the gossips said, why should she? He had left her a good pickle siller. A fu' grief is easy cairret.

'Whaur wull I pit him? Ask me that again, Tam Hume, an' the job gangs by ye. Whaur sud I pit him but aside his ain bairns?'

So once more from the tall house in the High Street the cortege wound its way to the lonely churchyard in Cabenha', the widow herself attending the funeral, to the great scandal of the neighbours. Very still she sat in the first coach, bolt upright, her neck covered with a thick scarf of crape.

A week later she revisited the grave. 'It'll no be lang noo,' she reflected, 'or I'm laid here mase!'

The income the doctors declared not only serious, but deadly. Well, she did not much care. She would be glad to lie in this beautiful spot beside Sam'l. Perhaps he knew by this time she had always loved him. Perhaps he realised how much she missed him—more than she would have believed.

'Keep yer feet aff that gress, wull ye no. It's never gotten leave tae grow—an' noo juist whan it's like tae get a chance ye'll no hinder folk frae trampin' on't.' It was auld Eleck, one eye looking at her, and one at the west gate.

He did not recognise her, so she spoke. 'This is a fine bit grund here,' she said. 'Lies fair in the sun and richt in front o' the kirk-door.'

'Fine eneuch,' grunted Eleck. 'But it's been an awfu' job wi' a' thae Fergusons dee', deen' ane efter the ither! That's the last o' them noo, thank guidness! Made an awfu' mess richt at the wast door tae! I'm tellan ye, for the last five years I've never been dune diggin' that bit up—ma Goad, ay!'

'Bit the last ane was mairried, was he no?'

'Mairried or single,' said Eleck surlily, 'there's nae mair gets in there. The place is fu'.'

'What dae ye mean?' Her voice was shrill with agony and dismay.

'I mean what I say. There's nae mair room there—no even for a wean! The place is fu'—feenished. Ma Goad, ay!'

Eleck turned on his heel and shauchled

away. He was not now ignorant of the woman's identity, and he held pronounced views of his own with regard to family interments.

FROM that day Leeb's throat became worse. A specialist shook his head and advised an operation. Before going to the home Leeb visited her elder brother and strove to wring from him a promise to bury her in her mother's grave.

But he proved adamant. 'Ye had a man o' yer ain, had ye no? Lie in yer ain grund, ma wumman!' The McAirds were not an affectionate family, being over-sensitive to each others' faults and very touchy about their own.

Then followed a period of pain and loneliness. Leeb's own folk were terribly afraid of anything smittal and paid only the briefest of visits. Her agonised letters to her brothers on the subject of her mother's grave were totally ignored.

By and by a stiffly-starched nurse took command of the sickroom. All Leeb's attempts, however, to discuss the subject about which she thought all day, and most of the night, were sternly frustrated. Nurse thought the whole thing a sick woman's unnatural obsession, and flatly refused to allow her to mention the grave at all.

But one day when it became clear that life was ebbing fast, Leeb asked to see the undertaker.

'Just to humour her, nurse,' whispered the doctor. 'It doesn't matter much now, anyway.'

Tam Hume had long retired and had sold his business to a young man, John Forbes, an incomer to the town, who knew neither the pedigree nor the family history of his customers. He came into the sickroom, obviously embarrassed, twirling his cap in his hand.

Leeb could scarcely speak, but her dark eyes still blazed. 'Ye ken the kirkyaird?' she said. 'New—grund—new grund!'

The young man nodded reassuringly. 'Ay, ay,' he said. 'I ken it fine. It's a' new grund frae the howe up tae the railin!'

Again Leeb essayed speech. John did not understand. Her words came in painful jerks. 'Ma grund—new grund—new grund—for me!'

The nurse motioned towards the door, and

John gladly stood up to go. 'It's a' richt, mistress. I ken the place fine. Yer man's name's on the stane. It's a fine bit o' new grund. I'll see ye laid there a' richt!'

Leeb's eyes started in her head in an agony of dismay. Merciful heavens! Surely he was not going to lay her *there*! In that grave, beside her hated rival! And she had schemed and planned, and planned and schemed, that Sybilla should lie there for ever—alone!

Her cry of anguish was strangled in her throat. She fell back on her pillows, speechless, and John Forbes, opening the door, ran full tilt down the stair, dislodging, in his flight, one of the brass stair-rods, which clattered noisily after him.

Still speechless, Leeb turned her tragic eyes on the uncomprehending placidity of the nurse's face. That good woman, stifling a yawn, held a medicine-glass to her patient's

lips. Very trying these hopeless cases were. She would be glad when it was all over.

SO the statue still stands, green a little with age, and more than a little weather-worn, but still smiling the same brooding wistful smile. 'Sacred to the memory of Sybilla, the beloved wife of Samuel Ferguson.'

But there is nothing to tell you that here also lies Leeb, who was also his wife, yet was not beloved—all her plans and schemings come to nought. Nevertheless, she sleeps here quietly enough in this spot that she hated most on earth. Every spring the bulbs that Sam'l planted come up anew, and the perennials bloom bravely. From the mingled dust below comes forth only sweetness and beauty. Oh Mighty Alchemist, what of that which was greater than dust—escaped away?

Beth Din

The Court of the Rabbis

LEO SPERO

LONDON'S most unusual and most private Court of Law, the Beth Din, stands on a secluded and grass-grown bomb-site, quietly tucked away between Whitechapel Road and Commercial Road, the two principal and breeziest arteries of the teeming East End. Its name means 'Court of Law', and here the Chief Rabbi of the Orthodox Ashkenazi Jews of the British Commonwealth sits in daily judgment with four other Rabbis.

He is Rabbi Israel Brodie, a bright-eyed, black-bearded, gently-militant man of middle age. He bears himself like a soldier as well as a priest, for he was once Senior Jewish Chaplain to the Forces, and went through the Dunkirk evacuation with dignity, interest, and probable enjoyment. At least, we may assume

as much from what a furious sergeant-major is reported to have shouted, amidst the roar and turmoil of battle, to the man who just wouldn't keep his blessed head down. The epithet used may not have been 'blessed', but the Chief Rabbi often recalls the incident with an appreciative chuckle. All he wanted was to see what was going on around him. And the Chief Rabbi still likes to know what is going on around him, and is still as reluctant as ever to bury his head in the sand.

So as he sits on his dais in the sombre audience-hall of that rather dingy building in Adler Street, E. 1., named after his wise and witty Victorian and Edwardian predecessor, Dr Herman Adler, Chief Rabbi Brodie keeps a shrewd and alert eye on the

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battle before and around him. For this is the Court of the Chief Rabbi, his very own Court, where he presides as Senior *Dayan*, or judge, with two fellow *Dayanim* flanking him on either side, listening, advising, and, in moments of excited controversy from below their dais, pacifying and reproving.

His four colleagues, men of like experience and wisdom to his own, are Rabbi Dr I. Grunfeld, Rabbi L. Grossmass, Rabbi A. Rapoport, and Rabbi Dr M. Lew. Each of them comes from a family distinguished for its religious learning. And here we must always remember that the Torah, the Holy Law first given to Moses on Mount Sinai, with the great books of commentary which have supplemented, clarified, and enlarged upon it throughout the centuries, is no mere book of devotion, but a complete *corpus juris*, setting forth the whole duty of man.

God is in the market-place, and God's law should be observed by the good Jew as faithfully across the counter as in the temple of worship. This is the Jewish belief, as it is the Quaker belief. Never at any time, in Jewish teaching and tradition, has ethical and social duty been separately compartmented away from religion. That is why, when one of our High Court judges finds occasion, at some point in a case before him, to say: 'This is not a Court of morals,' the dictum does not always fall upon the Jewish ear with complete conviction.

THE functions and jurisdiction of the office which is now accepted as that of Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth have always been somewhat indefinite. The Liberal and Progressive Jewish Congregations have broken away entirely from his fold, basically in matters where the breach has been too wide for later mending. At the other extreme, the ultra-orthodox Jewish congregations, corresponding to the Puritans of Cromwell's day, think his rule too lax, and go their own way in certain respects. These Puritans are to be found not only in the East Ends of London and other great cities with a large Jewish population. They have a strong congregation, for example, in suburban Golder's Green, with their own Rabbi and their own stricter rules of pious ritual and observance. But by and large they accept the authority of the Chief, even though he is for legal purposes merely Chief Rabbi of the United Synagogue, which

was constituted by special Act of Parliament in 1870, and controls by law, in general constitution and in expressly stated fields of operation, merely its own group of flourishing and admirably managed synagogues, mostly in the London area.

Yet another Jewish community, far smaller, but by far the oldest and most aristocratic in the Kingdom, stands entirely apart. This is the congregation of the Sephardim, the 'Spanish and Portuguese Jews', as they are called. They include descendants of the first Jewish families who were allowed by Oliver Cromwell to return to England, whence their forefathers, 'the King's Jews', had been so ruthlessly expelled by Edward I in 1290, in the feverish cruelty of the Crusades. They have always had their own Chief Rabbi, whom they call Haham, or 'The Wise One'. And they have their own vernacular, which is not the Judaeo-German called Yiddish, but a Spanish dialect known as Ladino, still spoken freely in the Levant, but hardly at all in the West. They pronounce Hebrew differently from their Ashkenazi brethren, the vast majority of Jews, who had settled in the ghettos of Russia, Poland, and Germany. Their liturgy is different; so are many of their customs and traditions. They are very orthodox, very proud, rather narrow, highly self-sufficient. And the Beth Din means about as much to them as the Curia in Rome would mean to the Church of Scotland.

So much for the flocks which are not Chief Rabbi Brodie's. Save for adding that orthodox Jewish communities throughout the British Commonwealth in practice accept him as their Chief Rabbi, though in accurate title he is not so.

SINCE Rabbi Brodie is at once Chief Rabbi and Chief Judge of the Beth Din, his dualistic authority in these separate functions merges much argument and business in a stream which is sometimes placid enough, sometimes rather turbulent, but always of absorbing interest. And this is why the almost ferocious allergy of his Court towards publicity is to be regretted. The spectator of other folks' worries and troubles, the '*tertius gaudens*', is never a commendable character. But one useful purpose of the public audience which is allowed in Britain to Courts of Law sitting in general judgment is that justice is not only done, but is seen to be done. It

means that matters of individual action but of public interest are watched from the public benches and reported in the public press with real benefit to countless numbers who may, at the time or at some other time, be faced with kindred problems and be able to weigh up and decide the answers for themselves without the expense and anxiety of going to Court.

Strict privacy is, of course, entirely proper in matrimonial disputes, in cases concerned with child welfare or juvenile delinquency, as also in matters brought to arbitration by the parties for the specific purpose of avoiding publicity. Our own courts rightly exclude the public from all such proceedings, and so does the Court of the Rabbis. But just as not all arbitrations outside the Beth Din are bound to be secret, and indeed might with advantage be heard in public, so there is much that comes before the Rabbis' Court, both in its ecclesiastical and in its lay jurisdiction, where open hearing and public judgment would be of real service to the Jewish community at large.

That does not, however, seem to be the view of the *Dayanim*. Theirs is in effect a secret court. No public benches, no press. Counsel and solicitors allowed only by previous agreement between the parties. No 'Law Reports'...

What a pity! For this is a kaleidoscope of a Court, full of human interest, concerned every day—and it sits every day, except on Sabbaths and fast days and festivals, and the days preceding these—with affairs which, in Francis Bacon's famous phrase, 'come home to men's business and bosoms.'

Court fees are rarely charged. No oath is administered, for the Rabbis hold that the Ninth Commandment should be sufficient to ensure that the truth is told. 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.' They claim that they can tell, nearly enough, whether a suitor or his witness is telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth. A bold claim indeed. But they make it confidently. And just as they will not administer any oath, because they are satisfied that it will not deter a liar from lying—and also because the Name of God should not be taken in vain—so they are always well satisfied that the truth will out, if you give it time and room.

But the Court of the Rabbis has its very special idiosyncrasies, even in the difficult business of evidence. Its judges certainly do not follow the strict rules of evidence as the

English and Scots law lays them down. The Beth Din takes the view that these are too technical for their applicants to grasp readily. They do not stop hearsay: they merely disregard it, sifting the wheat from the chaff as the often noisy hearing proceeds. But they will never accept the evidence of a witness who is a confirmed gambler, and can be proved to be such. This person, they say, is not to be relied upon. They may well be right.

ANY of the various gleaming red buses which pass by either end of Adler Street will set you down at a quiet byway where Hitler's bombers have not left much bricks and mortar standing. Here in summertime the grass grows lush and green among the parked cars, around the ruined church, and in the ancient churchyard at the Whitechapel Road end. The London pride and the ragwort, the coltsfoot and the fireweed, sing their cheerful street-arab song to the sprouting planes and lime saplings. And even in the grey winter days they are as little depressed by their desert of rubble as is the jovial, energetic human beehive which buzzes around them.

Here, for all the destruction of war, is a life of spirits undepressed, of brightness undimmed. Just as vigorous and combative as I remember it in those wistfully-recalled salad days of the 1920's, when I practised as a young lawyer in these parts, and my day's work was always fruity if seldom fruitful.

The Jewish East End in those days, I firmly believe, took the Beth Din, as a Court, rather—what is the fairest adverb? Shall we say casually? For certain, they did not take it as seriously as they do to-day. Its Rabbis were a bench—or maybe a bunch—of patient, kindly men, quite understanding if they happened to be on the right side—namely, your side. But they were no fun when they came down on the wrong side—the other side.

Stepney beyond their walls never heard of their doings: never heard about *you*. A Court of Arbitration? A tribunal where you came for agreement, and the law of the land would enforce that agreement once reached? How dull—and how unreal! Abiding by the unreported say-so of these five cloistered clerics who weren't real judges at all... No appeal—What nonsense. There was always an appeal, on points of law. And if your lawyer can't find a nice point of law, what are you hiring him for?

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No. For fun, you went to Whitechapel County Court, before the shrewd, sardonic Albert Cluer. He might tear a strip off you—he usually did—but it would be a comic strip. It got into the papers. You became News. It was as good as hiring a hall.

BUT let us remember that the judges of the Rabbis' Court, though with no English legal training or qualification, have always cheerfully tackled the intricacies of English common and statute law according to their own unconventional but considerable lights. They may well therefore in the past have provided frequent technical grounds for appeal. But nowadays their judgments on secular quarrels are seldom challenged; and in religious matters they cannot be challenged at all.

In the 1920's it was different. Stepney is just as lively to-day as it was then, but not as combative, not as litigious. The grandchildren of the Ghetto no longer go into battle over next to nothing. They have absorbed more of the good-natured Gentile live-and-let-live spirit than their grandparents or even their parents accepted. And most of them have learned at long last to appreciate, especially since the inflow of Hitler's victims, the countless, tireless services the Beth Din renders in translating, both literally and metaphorically, the secular laws and ordinances of a land of refuge, which with infinite generosity, now as always, offers comfort and help to the persecuted, but expects social order and good citizenship in return.

No need to detail or even enumerate these matters, whose intricacies still stretch far beyond the Iron Curtain. Sufficient to say that public departments of all kinds—Home Office, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance, as well as the Magistrates' Courts, and the High Court itself, look to the Court of the Rabbis for advice and assistance in many a problem of life in the New Dispersion, and have paid ready tribute to the services of Adler Street.

THE East End has not greatly changed since Zangwill's genius first illumined and interpreted a Peculiar People to their neighbours. True, Stepney's population is less than half what it was before the devastation, and

will so remain. Town-planning has decided that: and, anyway, the stream of migration from Eastern Europe has long dried up in tragedy. But there are still two worlds in Stepney. They meet and mingle, they are friendly together. They share the same bright cockney life in street and cinema and tavern. But essential differences separate London's two East Ends, if only because Yiddish remains the vernacular for thousands.

The legal proceedings at the Beth Din may be in cockney, or in Yiddish, or half-and-half. Nobody minds, least of all the Rabbis; unless some stickler who does not use Yiddish calls for a formal translation, in the United Nations fashion, by an official interpreter. There is invariably a certain liveliness in the bilingual give-and-take, an informality not easy to keep within the bounds that more stilted tribunals would preserve. Sometimes, indeed, there is just a little shouting—just a little.

It doesn't really matter. What matters, in the view of the Rabbis' Court, is that every applicant shall have his say, shall speak his piece freely, unhampered by restrictions he cannot be expected to understand, such as rules of evidence.

AS we have said, it is only after previous consent of both parties to a dispute that the professional advocate, barrister or solicitor, is granted audience before the Beth Din. And the first time he does attend he certainly gains a new experience. But it seldom becomes a habit.

At the risk of irreverence, may I recall that once-popular song of Clay Smith, an American revue-idol of my youth?

*I'll try anything once;
And if I like it, I'll try some more.*

Few members of the legal profession try a day's argument at the Beth Din more than once. They are out of the quiet waters they know. And it is not only the absence of frigid decorum which defeats them. There is a more important reason, very much to the credit of the Rabbis' Court.

I see it in this way. In their arbitration area of commercial and family disagreements the Rabbis feel happier cultivating their own garden with the simple tools they know. They can do without the hothouse equipment which professional lawyers find so congenial and

claim to be so essential in the cause of justice. In that delightful storehouse of shrewdness and witty wisdom which is called 'The Ethics of the Fathers' there is many a sharp dig at pedantry.

Some of the famous Rabbis of old could, indeed, themselves be pretty pedantic, especially in points of religious observance. But what might be called the common-law side of the Holy Torah was never pedantic. So maybe Chief Rabbi Brodie and his colleagues feel they can do their job on the basis of common horse-sense, without the importation of legalistic niceties.

THERE is one neo-Dickensian figure you will never see at the Beth Din, sitting hunched and evilly watchful on a back bench as he and his kind used to sit in Whitechapel County Court in the 1920's I remember, and, for all I know, still sit there to-day. These were the professional fomenters of strife whom Judge Cluer knew so well, and upon whose presence I have known him to comment in the middle of some action which he hinted should never have come to Court.

They called themselves 'accountants', though they had no professional qualifications whatsoever. But they did have brisk and busy offices, and good heads for all sharp practice. To them Stepneyites resorted far too often in the heat of some trading trouble or muddle: or, as often as not, these 'business advisers' smelt the trouble from afar, sought it out, and gleaned a rich harvest by deliberately making it worse.

Their 'advice' never composed any quarrel. 'Take him to Court,' they counselled. 'You've got a case, a good case. A certain winner—with the right lawyer. And I know just the man for you.' The hesitations of the reluctant

were artfully dispelled: his enthusiasm was soon worked up. The 'adviser' took his fee, and made an appointment at once, by telephone, with the right man.

And later on the spider cashed in again. Win or lose, he took his commission from the solicitor for business introduced. The Law Society might have frowned upon such things—but then, nobody told the Law Society.

Sometimes, indeed, young solicitors lacking capital were induced to lend their talents in practice to one or other of these Stepney tricksters. Offices, office staff and equipment, law library, clients—everything was forthcoming. On loan, of course—until some rift, fortunate for the young lawyer, ended the unorthodox partnership. By which time, however, launched at least into experience, if not yet into steady independent practice, the tyro was emboldened to strike out on his own account. Alas, how rare is gratitude in this hard world! No orchids for the spider . . . But the spider's ready-made law office soon found another tenant.

Yes, there was still plenty of scope for the fomenters of litigation thirty years ago in and around Zangwill's Whitechapel. With the Gentile, they could never do any business. And with the present-day Whitechapel of Wolf Mankowitz I somehow think trade is never as brisk as it was in the good old days.

For this relief, much thanks is due to the Court of the Rabbis, for they undoubtedly, as social preceptors and commercial arbitrators, have greatly enlarged their sphere of influence in and on the past generation, and drawn to their cloistered tribunal much of the old-time contentiousness which once, by its public display, did such regrettable disservice to Jewish dignity and common-sense. Their Court does a big job, almost too quietly—but uncommonly well.

The Illusionist

*Your smile the secret alchemy
That gilded every day.
Your voice the silvery wand
That whisked my heart away.
Such artistry, such magic,
On which I could depend—
Then, why, oh why, magician,
Did you vanish in the end!*

STANLEY PRESTON.

Worth from Waste

LANGSTON DAY

AS our population increases and we become more and more industrialised, it begins to look as if we may perish economically, if not suffocate physically, under the weight of our own dustbins. The slag-heaps of the North, the grey cones beside the china-clay pits of South Cornwall, are forming a kind of lunar landscape of dead mountains. Vast swamps of sludge surround our power-stations, and the goodness of the soil is trickling away in the refuse of great cities. In the immediate future we are threatened with the waste products of nuclear plants, which are deadly and abiding poisons. In most civilised countries the scientists are becoming seriously worried about the exhaust-pipes of industry, commerce, and domestic life.

AN urgent problem for us at the present moment is what to do with fly ash, a residue as fine as face-powder, which is left over when burning pulverised fuel. Every year our power-stations have more than 2½ million tons of this ash to deal with, and by 1960 the figure will probably be 4 million tons. It is a cumbersome and expensive method to mix it into a sludge, discharge it into lagoons, allow it to harden, and then cart it away.

But research work has shown that fly ash is very much like the volcanic ash which the Romans found so useful in making cement. Besides going into cement, fly ash can be used in brickmaking. Already there is a large fly ash brickworks in Belgium, and before long it is hoped that similar works will spring up beside our own power-stations. Waste products from the potteries have also been used in concrete-mixing abroad, but so far nothing of this kind has been done in this country.

Each year we are importing well over a million pounds' worth of raw materials and unmanufactured articles, and in most industries

after these materials have been used a residue remains which is really raw material in the wrong place. Far from making any use of these residues, firms go to considerable expense to get rid of them.

In the heavy industries, for instance, steel is treated with pickling acids which are used again and again until they become so saturated with sulphur that they will no longer react. They are then thrown away, and unless great care is taken they may find their way into rivers and poison the fish. But methods have now been discovered of separating out the acids and recovering the sulphur.

Sometimes an industry is producing acid wastes at one end and perhaps caustic soda at the other. Only recently has it been found that by combining the two they cancel each other out and yield valuable by-products. It is hoped to organise combined operations whereby a factory which has certain residues can be teamed up with its opposite number which ejects complementary residues.

Now that the embattled anglers of Great Britain have declared war successfully on firms which poison the fish, a serious worry for many directors is how to purify their effluents, and the Water Pollution Research Laboratory has been hard at work grappling with such problems as the treatment of waste waters from the kiering of cotton, of sewage containing gas liquor, and of wastes from photographic and printing processes. Valuable products can be extracted from sewers and effluents.

Ratepayers may take heart from the record of the Bradford Corporation, which has contributed 7d. in the £ to the rates by extracting grease from the city's wool-scouring mills. Most of the nation's 400,000 tons yearly of imported raw wool is treated in Bradford, and nearly half of the weight of wool is removed in scouring. For fifty years the Bradford Corporation has treated this sewage and

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recovered the wool-grease. Among other products it sells grease, soaps, fatty acids, lanolin, stearin, and 'Bradcor' paints. All the wagon axle-grease used by British Railways comes from Bradford's wool-grease. The latest marketable commodity is a sheep-marking fluid, which is said to be second to none.

A million pounds' worth of paint is lost annually in this country when cars are paint-sprayed. The paint falls into water-troughs, solidifies, and is simply thrown away. In Canada and the U.S.A. methods have been found of treating this waste paint and using it for second-grade purposes. No attempt has yet been made by us to imitate their example.

This is only one instance of waste in industry, paralleling the prodigal burning of coal in the days of our grandfathers. To-day the power-stations are setting an example by using electrostatic precipitators which recover some of the solid matter from smoke-stacks, including valuable substances like sulphur.

As an instance of what is being done abroad, the Eastman Kodak Company recovers 2,500,000 oz. of silver every year from films rejected in manufacture and from punchings from perforations of cinema-film. In fact, the recovery of silver exceeds the production of any silver-mine in the world.

IN commerce we are faced with much the same problems. What is to be done with the huge quantities of empty shells from shell-fish discharged by the big catering firms? Unprofitable material, you might think, but scientists tell us that these shells can be ground up and used for fertiliser, or even for food ingredients.

Still more unpromising are the mountains of coffee-grounds, tea-leaves, and cocoa-husks which emerge into the backyards of Lyons and other big firms. Could they be dried and burned? Is there any possible use for them? The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research is trying to find an answer to such questions. Since they started work in this direction a great many inquiries have come in. One of them was from the Uganda Protectorate, which is anxious to find a use for dead hippopotami. It seems that these creatures are doing a great deal of damage and that a hippo hunt is to be organised on a large scale.

No statistics are available of the number of

corks thrown away or of the pairs of old boots and shoes which are put into dustbins or perhaps used to adorn our hedges and ditches; but methods have been invented of pulverising cork and leather and reconstituting the powder into useful materials. It is even thought that a use might be found for the hair swept off the floors of barbers' shops.

IN these days a very large quantity of shavings and sawdust accumulates when trees are felled and wood is sawn or planed. In the fairy stories of our youth wood was so plentiful and cheap that we read only of wood-cutters and charcoal-burners, but now in some forests we might see plant which mixes the sawdust with resins and compresses it into synthetic boarding. The saplings in forestry trimmings are stripped of bark and used as pit-props, but the problem now is to find some use for the bark.

Most public health authorities are concerned mainly with purifying refuse to prevent the spread of disease. This means neutralising organic manures without making proper use of them. As somebody has neatly put it, we are flushing away the future fertility of the soil through the modern toilet. The Dutch have been quick to recognise the danger of this. They have discovered that since the beginning of the century the fertility of the soil has gradually diminished because too little organic manure has been returned to it. And so a government-sponsored company known as 'V.A.M.' is now at work supplying large quantities of refuse-compost to Dutch farmers and horticulturists. It is hoped before long to do something of the same kind in this country. Instead of being purified out of existence, the refuse of our big towns will be composted and put back on the land.

AGRICULTURE as well as manufacturing industry has its wastes which are seldom put to the best possible uses. Huge quantities of leaves, stalks, corn-cobs, pea-pods, and so forth, are left to rot, and the need has long been felt for some means of extracting the proteins and using them for animal food. For thirty or forty years laboratory methods have existed, but only now is there a really satisfactory protein-extraction plant which can be used economically on the farm. The grass, stalks, or pods are chopped up and then

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squeezed by tapering screw crushers, so that the green juice runs down into a settling tank. After being coagulated by steam treatment, the residue contains concentrated protein, fats, minerals, vitamins, and carbohydrates. As a paste, it can be fed to pigs and poultry, or it can be pressed into biscuits, made into meal, or put into cereals. The same process can be used to treat spent hops in the brewing industry, and, in fact, almost any vegetable waste which contains nutritious substances. Products from this source have already been used in soups and hashes.

Surprising things can be made from the fibrous wastes of agriculture. In America, where about 5 million dollars has been spent on research into uses for industrial and agricultural wastes, paper, rayon, and window-frames have been made from cornstalks, and synthetic plywood for aircraft from cobs and the heads of grain. Every day the Celotex Corporation manufactures 2 million square feet of insulating-board from bagasse and sugar-cane, while several pounds of soya-bean husks go into every Ford car—in lacquer work, horn buttons, switch-handles, and distributor-covers. In fact, there is a great deal of practical experience abroad on which we can build to bring about a mild revolution on the land, and increase our food-supplies.

Food ingredients can be found in the most unlikely places. Who would imagine that yeast could be extracted from sawdust? A process for doing this was invented by a Nobel chemistry prize-winner, Professor Friedrich Bergius, who claimed that it produced

a great deal of synthetic food for the German army in the last war. Two factories were turning out 800 tons of yeast a month, which equalled the protein value of the German meat-ration for 1,700,000 people. Chemists foresee large-scale extraction of protein from many kinds of so-called refuse and their conversion into human food by suitable processing and tasting up—for example, the taste of meat is said to be easily imitated by the addition of sodium glutinate.

WHEN we come to waste matters from nuclear plants, we are up against something which scientists admit may be as dangerous as the explosion of H-bombs. The dustbins of the Atomic Age may poison the human race. What can we do with this radioactive refuse? The American are burying it in lead coffins, which will eventually disintegrate and release their poisons, while we with our naval traditions prefer burial at sea, which may affect the world's fish-supplies.

But once again research work may succeed in converting poisons into useful substances. A most dangerous by-product of atomic piles is strontium, which gives out a lethal radiation for about thirty years. But the Harwell scientists have found that the soft strontium beam of radioactivity can be converted into electricity and fed into the Grid. In this way electrical current can be generated without power-stations, and in the future we may have electrical cars and buses powered by a practically inexhaustible source of energy.

Oxford Evening

*As here we watch the city melt and fade,
Grey into grey, the pale mists wreath and merge
All forms to one, all colour into shade,
No sound save where the river laps the verge.
And quiet ghosts still linger in the street;
Not lonely these, for their old world is here;
Silent they tread, as one by one they meet
By those dim walls which once to them were dear.
We speak no word, we have no need of speech;
Even as they, we two are ghosts to-night,
Intangible, remote, yet each to each
Nearer than touching, clearer than to sight:
And like these others, when our daylight dies
We shall remember where true beauty lies.*

M. DERWIN.



The Goat of Kaltuma

CHRISTOPHER TRACEY

IT was nearly sunset when the main flock of the town goats came drifting back from the desert. All day long in the blazing sun the two thousand of them had been herded along the riverbank seeking what they could devour. There was little that they could not devour, save only the 'usher bush, the Sodom apple—fit vegetation for that Phlegrean plain. But now the udders of the poor man's cows were distended, and they were returning from their economic crimes triumphant in a golden cloud of dust.

Two or three boys herded them slowly across the naked expanse of gravel which adjoined the town of square dun mud-built houses, past the parched cemetery with its tilted stones, past the municipal incinerators—where the herd polished off some drifting pieces of paper—and along the edge of the buildings.

How those small boys remembered each and every goat out of that great troop was a mystery. It was certainly a marvellous feat of unscientific intelligence. For as the flock passed the head of each street, a number of animals would break away from the throng, trot demurely down the road, and turn in at the door of their home. Occasionally some young he-goat who had formed an emotional

friendship during the day would try to sneak off down the wrong street with his new friend. Immediately a whistling, a treble yell, and a flying stone would turn the runagate back to the proper path—and the flock passed dwindling along the verge of the town until the last animal turned down some darkling alley, and boys and all were folded home for night.

That nightfall, however, brought no balm to Kaltuma, for her she-goat, the best she had of three, had not come home at dusk.

KALTUMA was, though she knew it not, the victim of a principle—Freedom—or the Abolition of Slavery. It is curious how even the best of principles, applied with the most humane will in the world, always involves some wastage and sacrifice of humanity. The destitution of Kaltuma's old age was part of this price.

She was a black pug-nosed Nuban from distant Kordofan. As a child she had found herself a slave in the cattle-camp of an Arab of the Hassania tribe on the White Nile. Fate had never bestowed any children upon her, and for sixty years she had worked for her master's family, happy, save for her barrenness, to belong to that remote nomadic world and to

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help tend the animals on which they all subsisted.

When the Cotton Syndicate began to operate its vast concession areas between the two Niles the demand for cotton-pickers drew Kaltuma's master and his family into its orbit. Each winter after harvesting their own crops the nomads moved into the cotton-fields, leaving most of their herds outside with herds-men. In the cotton-fields for wages the women and children picked cotton; and the head of the family went to the office and collected the wages.

For the first time in their lives the slaves of the nomads discovered that there was an independent living to be made in the world, on the cotton-fields for cash wages—a living not bounded by tribal grazing rights and lands. Outside, those seemingly endless steppes of grass and scrub thorn were actually all divided among the tribes; and the masterless man would starve unless he attached himself to some household of the indigenous Arabs. But here within the cotton-fields one could earn money, buy food, and set up a hut in some labour village and be beholden to no man any longer. It was a fine prospect for the young, but not so good for the old.

This rosy vista, described by liberated slaves, attracted the aged Kaltuma. She had only to go to the District Commissioner, they said, and he would give her a 'freedom paper'. Then her master could never take her back. She failed to realise that she was too old for freedom by now, and could not afford to dispense with a family. She was almost due to draw the social benefits of her lifelong serfdom: her master would unquestioningly have supported her through the last impotent years, when she could work no more. The cotton people would not do this; and, once the money ceased to come in, she would untended starve.

But the idea of freedom became as a bee in her bonnet. In spite of the earnest assurances of her young master—she had nursed him and known him all his life—she rejected his advice and proffered gifts. She slipped off with her friend and drew the fatal paper. Now she was free; her Arab family had gone off to the steppes for the rains and had not since returned.

All went well for a time. Money was good. Then suddenly her friend died. Then the rheumatics caught her, so that she could no longer stoop to pick without great pain.

Desolate and friendless, she had drifted into the town, and finding there a derelict hut she had usurped it.

This most illegal act proved her salvation. The rate-collector, finding her in possession and unable to pay the rates, ran her in before the Mamour—a kindly native officer. He managed to pull wires; her occupation of the hut was ignored, and a pittance was paid her from the public charity fund. It was indeed scarcely enough to keep body and soul together. But her three goats were her stand-by; in these lay her safety. All her life she had acquired a knowledge of domestic animals such as only a long, an intimate acquaintance could give. She had lived by day and slept by night among them, until she knew the personality, the voice, and even the footprint of every one of them. Nobody could have believed that she knew so much about them until she proved it true.

THE failure of the goat to return looked like a major calamity to the balance of Kaltuma's economy. She began to worry, and late that night went round to the goatherd. But he declared that he had seen the goat turn down her road all right. So nothing could be done till dawn.

With the first light, a gnarled and bent old figure, clad in the remnants of a blue dress, crept out of the door of her house. In her hand was a stick and in her head the remembrance of a hoofmark. With eyes fixed to the ground, she followed the road up out of the town. Behind her lay the sleeping city of thirty thousand souls, its slender minarets transfixing the ivory band of dawn. Before her lay an expanse of grey sand criss-crossed with tracks innumerable. The path of the flock returning the night before had been traversed and blurred by the passage of many people during the night, on foot or ass, on bicycle or car.

Slowly she worked her way around the town, northwards up the track of the incoming flock. She had gone a full mile along the outskirts of the buildings, when she drew up sharp, turned around, and began, just as swiftly as her old limbs would carry her, to retrace her way.

When she had come back to the cemetery, she turned out westwards from the town and hobbled resolutely away. What she had seen had filled her with alarm. The tracks she

THE GOAT OF KALTUMA

sought had been moving reluctantly and had been led along by a man's. They went to a solitary saisaban tree that stood among the graves.

Cursed above all trees is the saisaban tree! It has a green, a gangrenous bark. It has a meagre yellow jaundiced flower. It is not to be eaten even of goats. It gives no shade in a shadeless land. Introduced as an ornament into the wildernesses of the Sudan by brutal pashas of an old regime, it flourishes without water in the most acid of soils. It is surely a native of Aceldama. It figures ever in the annals of crime.

Under that saisaban tree Kaltuma found a pool of blood, and she sat her down and she wept.

WHEN the first flush of woe had passed, anger supervened. The shrunk figure arose, and with staccato vigour hobbled away to the northwards. Her glittering eye was still fixed on the ground, and she muttered as she moved.

Out of the cemetery, down to the khor, up the slope, past the quarry. The second and the third quarters fell behind, and nearly two miles had gone when she came to the Fellata village. This was a village of strangers who come from the west on pilgrimage, stay for a while to labour, then journey on to Mecca.

Kaltuma turned into a street of grass huts, and then whisked quickly into a house surrounded by a mat fence. And behold, upon

the door of the hut hung the new flayed jacket of her goat; and before the door sat a villain eating the broiled flesh of her goat!

Her shrill imprecations astonished the villain no less than the neighbours. The watch and a multitude came running. Pandemonium ensued.

When order and sense had been, at length, restored, the villain, handcuffed and bearing skin and pot, the tokens of his crime, was led off by the constable to the police-station. Like a malevolent witch the vengeful Kaltuma tagged along behind.

'But what brought you so far to the house of the accused?' inquired the magistrate, suspicious of duplicity and guile.

'Why, the foot of my goat, of course—what do you think?' rasped the crone. She did not add 'stupid'—she implied it.

'Do you really mean to say that you just followed the tracks of your lost goat, that you never knew this man before?'

'Of course I never knowed un before. What's the matter with you? Do you think I don't know the foot of my own goat?'

He did think so. But the neighbours had identified the goatskin with one accord. The villain had confessed in full and without extenuation; and a fact incredible to the educated, but a commonplace to the ignorant, had been indubitably established. Not only the eye of science is microscopic.

So the villain was given three months remediless—and out of the fine Kaltuma purchased a new she-goat and two young.

Moth

*Flaming petals
Cupped in light
Yield not to moth's
Persistent flight.*

*Pale wings hover
In retreat;
Then forward flit
And trembling beat*

*Upon the bloom
Aglow with fire
Radiating
Love's desire.*

*Swirls the moth in
Ecstasy
Downward to its
Destiny*

*On a crumpled
Funeral pyre
Kindled by a
Phantom flower.*

E. H. RAY.

Magic in Malaya

BETTY LUMSDEN MILNE

THIS is not a serious ethnological study. It is merely an account of magic I have heard of and seen, and even, if you will believe it, practised.

Most people in Malaya believe in magic in some form or other. Of Malays and Chinese in the country districts I should say that at least ninety-five per cent are firmly convinced of its efficacy, though with the Chinese it is largely confused with religion. Malays, on the contrary, are flouting the teachings of Islam if they make use of magic; but still, they do. Magic, I suppose, is older than Islam. The Indians in Malaya are fewer than either Malays or Chinese, but I should say the proportion of believers is just as high. However, I do not think they have as many practitioners.

Among Malays, the magician, who is called a 'pawang', is also a herbalist and a sort of hedge-doctor. As far as his magic goes, it is not so much what he does, as what the people believe he can do: nevertheless he does, on occasion, deliver the goods.

THERE was once a steamroller which ran off a country road on to the grass verge, which was a morass, and sank. The local engineer, a European, came along with a lorry to drag it out, but failed. Thereupon enormous gangs of labourers pulling on a hawser were tried; then elephants—but nothing would budge the roller. As all paused, feeling very hot and bad-tempered, along came the pawang and offered to lift the steamroller back on to the road. At first the engineer snubbed him: he was in no mood for silly jokes. But a Malay foreman suggested that the pawang be given a trial: so they asked him how much he wanted, and he said fifty dollars—a very modest sum considering.

'Go ahead!' said the engineer, more than a little incredulous.

'Oh no, tuan! This thing must be done alone, with none to see.'

At this, the impatient Europeans went snorting home, but the Asians thought it quite reasonable. After all, why *should* he give away his secrets? So everyone went home, and night fell, with the steamroller still sunk deep in the mud.

In the morning the steamroller was back on the road, and the pawang waiting at the Public Works Office to claim his fifty dollars. And to this day no one has ever discovered how he did it.

I have already suggested, however, that it is the people's belief in the power of the pawang which is even more significant than what the pawang does. There was the case of Mat Indra, the notorious Malay bandit—very few of the bandits are Malays, by the way—who boasted that he had been rendered invulnerable by a pawang, and invincible as well. True, some wise heads had wagged about this and thought that he had forfeited his invulnerability and the rest because he had mutilated the dead. But most people still believed in it.

Now one day it was known that the bandit was going to have a meal in a certain village, and the people hired a pawang. This pawang drugged his coffee, and when he had passed out they fetched the police, and that was the end of Mat Indra. The point, however, was that they could just as well have doped the coffee themselves, but they believed that the man was protected by magic, and only by magic could he be overcome. They told me about it the same evening, and how Mat Indra had been caught by the power of the pawang. It was an expensive business, because they had to share the reward with the pawang, and the reward was £8750.

Some years ago a Malay who had incurred the enmity of a relation of his wife's suddenly saw his enemy rushing at him, in broad day-

light, with a keris. With great presence of mind he saved his own life by shouting: 'Don't spoil your keris, man! Don't you know I'm invulnerable?'*

Actually, he did not believe himself to be invulnerable, since he had never employed a pawang for this purpose; it was just a flash of quick thought; but so strong was the attacker's belief in magic that he went off looking extremely silly.

IT is not only the people who believe in magic. The law also makes allowances for it, though I cannot imagine, since law in Malaya closely follows British law, in what section of what act such allowance can be found. However, a lawyer friend of mine, named Cooper, told me this experience.

He was briefed to defend a certain Hamid on a charge of murder, and went to the jail to interview him. Trying to get at the facts of the case, he asked Hamid whether or not he had killed Razak, the deceased, and to his surprise Hamid said that he had. He seemed to want to talk about it, so Cooper let him.

'It was like this,' he began, and paused. 'The tuan knows that I am a pawang?'

Cooper nodded.

'A pawang of long standing, tuan, and well respected; and to me came Razak, asking to be made invulnerable. So I performed all the rites, omitting nothing.

'When all was done, Razak said: "Am I now invulnerable?"

'I answered that he was.

'"'Take this, then, and stab me in the belly," and he put his keris into my hand.

'Without thought, since I had conferred invulnerability upon him, I did it. Truly on that day must a powerful evil spirit have been present, for the thrust killed him.'

It was as simple as that. But the incredible part of the story is that Hamid was acquitted.

ANOTHER thing a pawang does is to put a 'charm' on anyone. We should in England use the word 'spell', but it is always referred to by English-speaking people in Malaya as a charm. It can be done, they say, for any grudge: and it is often done on account of jealousy in a love affair, or the anger of a

rejected lover. The disgruntled one, he or she, pays the pawang to put a charm on the enemy, whereupon, the theory is, the other person begins to go gaga and generally to lose vitality, wither away, and die.

This, I know, is not peculiar to Malaya, and it is not very far from the old European custom of sticking pins in a wax figure, and, of course, similar tales of African witch-doctors are legion.

My personal belief, however, is that it is not the pawang or the witch-doctor who brings about these dire results, but the victim himself, and I have for years defied anyone to produce cast-iron evidence of such a thing happening without the victim's knowledge. The victim, in fact, kills himself by auto-suggestion. Great is faith.

One case was quoted to me of a baby who was 'charmed' to death as an act of revenge on his mother, but when I asked why there had been no post-mortem to detect poison, and no inquest, the case, as evidence, collapsed.

This brings me to the strange case of the Irish doctor. He was a bachelor, and had a private practice in an up-country town and in the surrounding rubber estates. All went well with his practice for several years. Then quite suddenly he began to act strangely. Sometimes he neglected his practice; at other times he made his rounds as usual. In the Club it was noticed that he was morose and he began to talk of some mysterious They, who were, he said, after him. In general, his friends seemed to think what he needed was a bit of leave, so they gave him a drink and told him to cheer up. This was all right for a time, but soon the periods of odd behaviour became longer, until finally he shut himself up alone in his house. By this time, the Asians had begun to say that someone had charmed him.

Of course, it was quite possible that he had made an enemy. As a doctor, he may have given evidence against so-and-so's relation in a murder case, or reported someone else to the police for cruelty to a child, or persuaded some family to send a cherished eldest son to hospital, with fatal results. The possibilities were endless. But he would not specify anyone more definite than the mysterious They. 'They've got me,' he began to say. Soon he became really ill, and at last his friends forcibly removed him to hospital. Here he was examined with the greatest care by the Government doctor who found nothing whatever the matter.

* This incident is also noted in Dr Gerald Gardner's book *Keris and Other Malay Weapons*.

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Neglect of the practice had considerably reduced the doctor's bank balance and his planter friends, discovering this, passed round the hat and bought him a passage home. Then they visited him in hospital to tell him about it. 'All you want, my boy, is a sea-voyage. That'll put you right.'

'It's too late. They've got me. Nothing can help me now.'

'Oh, come! Pull yourself together, man. The ship sails on the 19th. We'll take you down on the 18th and get you on board the night before. We'll give you the time of your life!'

'They've done for me. It's too late!'

'Nonsense! You'll leave here with us on the 18th.'

'I shan't last till the 18th. They've got me. And he died on the 17th.'

To Europeans his death is a mystery to this day. To Asians it is quite simple. He was charmed. All I can say is that, if he had an enemy and that enemy paid a pawang to charm the Irish doctor, then he wasted his money—because the doctor killed himself without help from any pawang.

I HAVE suggested at the beginning of this article that I myself have dabbled in magic. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that I have from time to time made use of the belief in magic.

One instance that I recall was in Changi Prison in 1942. There were a number of Asian women—married to Europeans, or having otherwise offended the Japs—who were imprisoned with us. In fact, they were in the majority. One Siamese woman had adopted a little Chinese girl, then five years old.

It was obvious that the child was a 'mui-tsai' or slave girl, because, even at that age, she had to fetch and carry for her 'mother'. Naturally enough such a small child often dropped and broke the things she was made to carry, for which she was unmercifully beaten. I have seen weals all over her little back. We were all furious about it, but there was nothing we could do. The woman defied anyone who remonstrated with her, and said the child was hers, bought and paid for, and if we interfered she would just give her an extra beating. This we knew she would do, and the less we said the better. It was useless reporting the matter to the Japanese—though to give them their due they did no active harm to children—

because they would always take the word of an Asian against a European, and would have rejoiced in the opportunity of accepting her story. We hadn't even a hope of making them look at the child's back.

Then I had an idea. I remembered the case of the Irish doctor, and my theory that if a person could be made to believe that he or she had been charmed, the job was done. So I conspired with a young Eurasian friend, an attractive girl and extremely clever, who agreed to help. I told her to join groups of gossiping Asian women and spread the awful rumour that someone had charmed the Siamese. The charm was to take effect, I said, the next time she beat the child. She would feel it in her right arm first. Then slowly, dreadfully, paralysis would creep all through her body, and so on. There was plenty more.

My clever little friend did her job splendidly. The rumour ricocheted back to me in twenty-four hours, something like this. A Chinese girl said to me: 'What do you think, erh? Somebodee has charmed that Siamese woman, erh?' And she told me the whole fearsome story, with more details acquired in transit, finishing up with: 'Dreadful, erh? Poor thing!'

I said: 'Poor thing—my foot! According to your story she has only to stop beating the child and nothing will happen. And if she doesn't, then serve her jolly well right! That is,' I added as an afterthought, 'if you believe in these things.'

'But if there is somebodee here and she can do charms, we must be verree careful, erh?'

'That's up to you,' I said, 'if you believe in charms.'

Well, believe it or not, it worked. From that day on there was no further report of the child being beaten, and I never saw another mark on her body.

IN Muar, where I live, I am supposed to have killed a man by magic. I will tell you later how that belief arose, but first, if you will bear with me, I will give you two instances of the power of the belief itself.

The first concerned Zaleha, a Malay girl who was living and working away from home, in those days a very strange thing for a Malay girl to do. This attracted the attention of a professional matchmaker, who visited her several times, first with motherly advice to a young girl living alone, and later with a

proposal of marriage. There was a young man, she said, who had seen Zaleha, and had fallen desperately in love with her. She must marry him. He would take no refusal.

Now Zaleha had for some reason a determination not to marry among strangers. Some time or other, when she went home for her holidays, a marriage would be arranged for her among her own people, and in her own district. Until then she had no interest in any young man, however much in love. She might have changed her mind had she fallen in love herself, but so far this had not happened, so she refused to consider the proposal at all.

After several efforts to make her change her mind, the matchmaker arrived one evening with the story that the young man, still determined to have her, had threatened to put a charm on her, or, rather, to get a pawang to do it. Zaleha was terrified. If something was not done, she would frighten herself into a coffin in no time.

I spoke to a Malay friend of mine, who was very sensible, and we both realised that the first thing to be dealt with was Zaleha's psychological condition. So my friend gave me, for her, a piece of paper inscribed with a text from the Koran about the protection of Allah, which she was always to wear on her body, and then no charm could touch her.

I gave her this, and she seemed much comforted, but there still remained the matchmaker to deal with. I suspected that she was using the charm business as a threat, and that the young man, if he existed, had merely asked her to find him a wife, without knowing Zaleha at all, but that the woman, finding her unprotected by any member of her family, was determined to get her married for the sake of the commission on the job.

Then I had a talk to Zaleha and offered to see the woman and send her about her business; but Zaleha was so terrified that she would not even tell me the woman's name. So I reminded her of the man I am supposed to have killed in order to protect my gardener. 'Of course,' I said, 'you know that I had nothing to do with Tara Singh's death, but many people believe it, and you can pretend to do so. Tell this woman the next time she comes to see you the whole story, just as a bit of gossip. If she already knows it, discuss it, and then say that is how I protect my friends, and that I have promised to protect you.'

Once more it worked. The woman

listened, turned very pale, Zaleha said, and never came near her again.

THE other instance concerned a young Eurasian teacher on my staff, whom I will call Keith. He had been very foolish and got into debt, and his mother, who lived a long way off, sold some property and sent me the money, asking me to see that the debts were paid and that they were reasonable. She was referring to the small moneylenders' habit of charging astronomical interest. I gladly undertook to do this, and Keith agreed to pay part of his salary every month into this fund, and eventually we cleared everything up.

In the last case the moneylender was trying to get enormous interest. Allowing for all reasonable charges, I thought he should be paid \$90, and he was demanding \$160. So I gave Keith his mother's \$90, told him to take a friend with him as witness, pay the amount and get his promissory note. I also told him what to say if the moneylender refused to give it back for that sum.

He came back astonished, but jubilant. He had offered the \$90, as I told him, and the moneylender had abused him roundly for daring to demand the return of the note for anything less than the full amount. 'Then,' said Keith, 'though I was rather scared, I said, as you told me, in a very deep voice: "Remember what happened to Tara Singh!" At that he turned and ran into his house, and came back with the pro-note and gave it to me, and all the time he kept whispering: "Don't speak any more! Don't speak any more!"'

AND now I must relate what actually did happen to Tara Singh.

This man was a moneylender of the worst type. One day I noticed him in my school compound, where he had no right to be, so I watched him till I saw that he was demanding something, money of course, from one of my gardeners, a Javanese named Mahdi. When he had gone, I called Mahdi, who confessed that he had been hard up and had borrowed five dollars from Tara Singh, who had come round—towards the end of the month—offering to lend money right and left. I asked how much he had signed for, because the custom is to make the borrower sign for the total amount of principal and interest. He did

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not know. Tara Singh had made him sign a blank sheet of paper.

'Well,' I said, 'go and tell Tara Singh to come and see me and bring the paper, and I will pay him the proper amount, and you can pay me back a dollar a month.'

Mahdi went, but Tara Singh flew into a rage and said that, for daring to report the matter to me, he must pay forty dollars, which amount he thereupon typed above Mahdi's signature.

I now reported the matter to a police-officer, who sent for Tara Singh, note and all. The officer told me afterwards that Tara Singh had been very truculent, that there was something distinctly phoney about the note, and he advised that my man should refuse to pay anything at all, and let Tara Singh sue if he dared.

It took me some time to stiffen Mahdi up to the point of refusing, for these simple people are very frightened of moneylenders and their threats; but I managed it, and he refused.

Tara Singh was hopping mad. Twice he

came shouting into the compound, and the second time I sent for the police to remove him. He was drunk, anyway. Then he sent a man to tell me that he was going to charm me to death. Oh, I thought, two can play at that game. So I gazed at the messenger in a piercing manner and said, in measured, sombre tones: 'Go back and tell Tara Singh that he will come to a very bad end!'

Four days later, he was dead.

In actual fact, he had been knocked down during a drunken quarrel, and had fractured his skull on a concrete step.

It so happened that the man who told me he was dead was the man he had sent to threaten me. This was too good a chance to miss, so once more I gazed at him in a piercing manner and said in measured, sombre tones: 'What... did... I... tell... you?'

And at that moment was born the story that I had killed Tara Singh by magic. I could not kill this story now if I tried. I do not try.

The Fife Adventurers in Lewis

A. C. MacNEILL

HIS needs pressing, his coffers empty, and, only too often, his majesty disregarded by the more unenlightened of his subjects, King Jamie the Saxt looked out on the closing years of the century with a jaundiced eye. And yet, so simple was the cure for all his worries and troubles. Money was the panacea. Money he must have. But from whence was money to come? Where, in all his kingdom, was there an extra groat to be gathered?

North, south, and east he looked, to see only a land squeezed empty of gold. To the west—to the west, what? The Highlands, the narrow Minch and the islands beyond. The islands beyond! The islands beyond? He mused over the question they posed, remembered again the travellers' tales of the

Long Island of Lewis, its reputed fertility, its richness in fish, in cattle and sheep—and its wild and uncivilised inhabitants.

Of these people one of his Council had written describing them as 'voyd of ony knowlege of God or His Religioun, and naturallie abhoiring all kynd of civilitie, quha hes givin thameselfis over to all kynd of barbarietie and inhumanitie occupying in the meantime and violentlie possessing his Hienes proper landis without payment of maill or gressum thairfore.'

Surely such a state of affairs was an insult to his majesty. No longer should the island be allowed to continue a black spot in his realm. Civilise and develop must be the new watchword for that part of his kingdom. But

THE FIFE ADVENTURERS IN LEWIS

how? How to bring the island and its people within the Glory of God and his own tight fist. How? Again, how?

Civilise and develop was the only answer. And who more fit to do the work than those already proven commercial missionaries, the Gentlemen of the Kingdom of Fife and of the Lothians around his capital? Who better able than they to squeeze gold from the sunset, even if they might leave behind an afterglow the colour of blood?

The Gentlemen agreed—for a consideration, a considerable consideration, formed a Syndicate of Adventurers, and, on a raw December day in 1598 landed on the bleak shores of the new El Dorado with five hundred fighting men at their back.

THE Adventurers' landing in Stornoway Bay was stoutly opposed, for, although old Ruari Mor MacLeod, once paramount Chief of Lewis, was dead, he had left behind a full quiver, born on both sides of the blanket. Two of the less blessed led the resistance, Murdo and Neil, but they were swept aside by the trained mercenaries. Murdo took with his boat to the waters of the Minch, while Neil and his fighting-men withdrew westwards to the moors. Their way cleared, the invaders built a stockade, unloaded their stores, and looked round eagerly for the riches to be picked up.

But there were no riches. There was not even food for the men or sustenance for their beasts. Neil and his followers in their retreat had adopted the scorched earth policy. The days were short, wet, and cold, fevers and fluxes struck down the incomers, and, with both the long heel of winter and the bleak days of spring still ahead, the colonists were forced to send one of their leaders, Leirmont of Balconie, back to the mainland to tell the tale of hardships and bring in fresh supplies.

As Balconie sailed out into the Minch, Murdo, with a galley and two birlinns, was waiting in the shelter of Kintail for just such a sortie. The fight was short and sharp. Balconie was taken prisoner, most of his followers killed, and a ransom demand dispatched to the King and Council.

The winter wore on, and the plight of the colonists worsened as they waited for the much-needed supplies which never came. Colonel Stewart and Spens of Wormiston took another ship to the south on the same

errand and, seeing the garrison thus weakened, Neil MacLeod struck in with his men from the hinterland. His army of 'two hundred bludie and wiket' Lewismen killed more than twenty of the Fifers and, retreating again to the wilds of the west, took with them most of the horses, sheep, and cattle.

NEWS of this disaster was a bitter blow to the King's pride and purse. Infuriated, he appointed the Duke of Lennox and the Marquis of Huntly as Justices over the island, ordered them to assist with all their power the Syndicate of Adventurers and to 'prosequite with fyre, sword and all kinds of hostilitie' those who, openly or secretly, worked against the scheme of colonisation.

That there were secret enemies of the project was suspected by many, and most saw in MacKenzie of Kintail the chief antagonist. It was believed that he had aided Murdo in his attack on Balconie's ship and it was known that he held, more or less a prisoner, Tormod MacLeod, the younger brother of Torquil Dhu, who, before he was murdered, had been one of the Chiefs of the island. But to the unhappy colonists Murdo was enemy number one and, when news came to them of the death of Balconie, they swore to have his life.

Safe and strong on the waters of the Minch or under the shadow of Kintail, Murdo could not easily be laid by the heels, but where direct attack showed little promise, treachery might succeed. It was common knowledge that there was little love lost between Neil and Murdo, so, approaching the former with promises of a free pardon and a grant of land, they got his word that, in his own way, he would bring Murdo in. Arranging a meeting with Murdo, he laid an ambush, seized him and twelve of his followers, and brought the captives in to Stornoway.

The less important prisoners were given short shrift, strung up on the spot, their heads severed from the bodies, packed in a sack and shipped to Edinburgh as proof that, at length, the colonists were breaking down the hard core of resistance. Murdo, sent prisoner to St Andrews, was accorded a more formal trial by the Fife Justices there. They, perhaps not wholly unbiased, and having been directly briefed, found him guilty, and for his heinous crime of local patriotism he was hanged, drawn, and quartered.

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While awaiting his trial, Murdo had spoken with a certain carelessness of some of his exploits, proving that Kintail was seriously involved in the misfortunes of the colonists, but, with the dumb head now fixed on the Nether Bow at Edinburgh, MacKenzie not only refuted all the charges but also entered into a compact to help the Syndicate. Encouraged by this, they entered the new century with high hopes, planned a new town, parcelled out the lands of Lewis amongst themselves, and took their rightful place as the master class. The natives were looked on and treated as slaves, segregated from the rulers, and success at last seemed about to bless the venture.

However, while Neil was alive there could be no tranquillity. Since betraying Murdo, he had seemed to work into the scheme of things, but he was not a man who could be content in the role of underdog. After a trifling quarrel with Spens of Wormiston he took once more to the moors and the old way of life.

The Adventurers realised that the only way to complete success was over Neil's dead body, and a strong force was organised and set out from Stornoway to surprise and capture him. But he still had friends around the camp. They sent him warning. Instead of hiding deeper in the moors, he took the bold course. Mustering his men, he led them close to Stornoway, watched the punitive expedition set out to effect his capture, slipped in behind them in the dark, and attacked from the rear. They panicked at the unexpected attack, put up a poor fight, and, although some of them won back to the shelter of the stockade, sixty were left dead on the moor.

From across the Minch Kintail looked on unmoved at this development. His compact with the colonists was no load on his conscience and, sure now that their venture was doomed, he sent Tormod MacLeod over to Lewis to join Neil.

His arrival decided the fate of the Fifers. Every free man in the island rallied to the resistance and, in the spring of 1602, they struck. The camp was stormed, the fort burned, the majority of the colonists killed and the remainder taken prisoner. Flushed with this success, Tormod and Neil spared the lives of the captives on condition that they would secure from the King a free pardon for all the misdeeds of the MacLeods, resign their rights and claims in Lewis to the victors, and

leave behind as hostages for the King's mercy Spens of Wormiston and Monypenny of Kinkell.

So, their dead, their hostages, and their ruined hopes left behind, the few survivors of the first attempt to civilise and develop the island sailed sadly eastwards across the Minch to explain to an impoverished and angry King that there were still men in his realm who valued freedom above life itself.

KING JAMES'S first action was to redeem the hostages by granting pardon to Tormod and Neil, but, Spens and Monypenny safely home, he immediately planned another expedition, not merely to civilise and develop the unwilling natives but to exterminate them. Then, as before, James's empty Treasury was his greatest stumbling-block. The Convention of the Estates refused to sanction grants for the purpose and, to their credit, also turned down the King's personal plan to cut the costs of an expedition by paying the troops involved in base coin. So, with a fine diplomatic gesture, James put the onus of repossessing the island back on the thoroughly disillusioned Syndicate, ordered each member to hire and equip thirty soldiers, lay in sufficient provisions for a year, and complete the work of development and civilisation within twelve months of again landing in Lewis. But before the expedition was ready to set out Queen Elizabeth of England died and, in the glory and excitement of a dual crown, James let the affairs of Lewis rest in the pending tray.

It was two years before he again found time to devote to the problem of that now more than ever outlandish fragment of his kingdoms. In July 1605 he appointed Spens of Wormiston, Hay of Nethercliff, and Ker of Hirth as Justices and Commissioners in Lewis for a period of one year, enjoining them not to be sparing in the use of 'fyre or ony warlyke ingyne' that might hasten the process of developing and civilising.

That August the new expedition set out, and so imposing was its strength that Kintail decided on a personal policy of insurance by sending with it some of his fighting-men. Tormod MacLeod, overawed by the new force deployed against the island, and ignoring the advice of the lionhearted Neil, decided not to oppose the landing. But Neil would have no truck with any appeasers and once

THE FIFE ADVENTURERS IN LEWIS

more withdrew west to the moors, while Tormod, putting his trust in the word of the King, journeyed to London and spent the next ten years in prison for his credulity.

Through the remainder of that summer, all winter, and into the following spring Neil kept up an unrelenting guerrilla warfare against the new settlement. Their crops were spoiled, their cattle and sheep harried, and this cold war, livened by hotter spells, preyed on the nerves of the settlers, who gradually lost heart and hope. But in the summer, to their relief, Neil came forward with an offer of peace, professed to have seen the error of his ways, and happily promised the services of all his men to promote a new era of prosperity.

Overjoyed, the settlers welcomed him with open arms, seeing at long last the end of their troubles. Neil himself was given a position of some importance, his men were employed in and around the settlement, and all went on happily till in the dark of a night the poor deluded colonists woke to the sound of shots, the clash of swords, the smell of burning, and the screams of death. When morning came there was only ruin and ash, dead men, and, shrinking in nooks and crannies where they had hidden, a few cowering panic-stricken survivors.

Then, the tide of success running high, Ruari MacLeod of Harris threw in his lot with Neil. Together they hunted and harried the few 'foreigners' still at liberty in the island. Coming in once more on the side of the King, Kintail gave an undertaking in September to recover Stornoway Castle, but the colonists still alive had had enough. Completely ruined and discouraged, they sailed east and, for the second time, the King's policy of development and civilisation by fire and sword proved a dismal failure.

BUT even then His Royal Obstinacy refused to recognise defeat. While in parts lying farther south he modified his former policy of bringing peace to the island outposts of his kingdom 'not be agreement with the people but be the extirpation of thame', he had no intention of relaxing in Lewis. Others might respond to more gentle ways, but not those who opposed his pet colonists from Fife.

A new landing was made at Stornoway, and Kintail, now my Lord MacKenzie of

Kintail, was charged with the task of providing the settlers with adequate protection. This in no way agreed with his lordship's personal plans. If the third settlement met with the same fate as the others, there was more than an even chance that the rich prize of Lewis would fall, by default, into his own hands. But the command of his King had to be obeyed, so he sent his brother Roderick with four hundred men to act as garrison. In addition, he was also required to supply such necessities as the settlers might require till they were self-supporting, and, obeying this order, he loaded a ship with supplies and sent it west into the Minch. But, at the same time, he informed Neil MacLeod of the sailing-date and he, nothing loth, intercepted the vessel, looted it, and the settlers were left in a sorry plight.

Without supplies their chances of surviving the winter were slight, so Sir George Hay and Spens of Wormiston withdrew the majority of the colony back to Fife, leaving only a small garrison to hold the fort till they would return in the spring with reinforcements and stores.

It was all as Kintail had planned. Neil struck at once, overran the weakened garrison, slew all who resisted, and, generous in victory, sent the prisoners home unharmed to the kindlier east.

For Hay and Spens that was the last straw. No matter how great the riches of the Lews, they resolved to cut their losses, and they found a ready buyer of their interests, at a bargain price, in my Lord Kintail. At long last his game of waiting, of playing both ends against the middle, of double-dealing, and lip-service to King and colonists paid off. Lewis was his.

Still in the offing hovered that fiery patriot Neil, welcoming the men of Kintail no more than the men of Fife. Tactfully he retreated to the island of Birsay at the mouth of Loch Roag as the Mackenzie grip tightened. His hopes of winning back by the sword the lands of his father were slight, almost non-existent. But there was always a chance that by some accident of fate the light of the King's smile might yet shine on him. Always the optimist, always the unconquered, he bided his time.

OPPORTUNITY came in a strange guise. Crippled, many of her crew wounded, desperately in need of a refit, the pirate craft

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Priam drifted into the shelter of the narrows between Birsay and Bernera. Neil welcomed her captain, Peter Love, as a brother outlaw, admired greatly the cargo of rich spices, hides, precious stones and gold in the *Priam's* hold, and gave all the help in his power to hurry the corsair back to her nefarious trade.

Captain Love, grateful for the help, saw in the quiet anchorage an ideal base for his future operations, and in the eyes of one of Neil's kinswomen he saw another promise. To his proposal of marriage Neil gave his full support and, for once on the side of Church and State, declared that the union should be solemnised with due ceremony. The first of the feasts was an engagement party, and perhaps Captain Peter's eyes were dazzled by the beauty of his loved one so that he failed to notice that very few of the male MacLeods were amongst the guests. In the morning he realised why. He woke to the bite of irons on wrist and ankle, the knowledge that his ship had been captured, many of the crew killed and the others prisoner like himself.

Immediately Neil sent news of his important capture abroad. The Privy Council were delighted at the evidence of poacher turned gamekeeper and had his name taken off the roster of outlaws for a period of six months, by which time they had hopes that complete redemption might take place.

Officers were sent from Edinburgh to take over the *Priam* and her rich cargo, but while they found the spices and hides in her holds there was nothing to show that she had ever carried gold or jewels. Perhaps she never had. Perhaps Captain Love and his men strung up on the sands at Leith with the tow at their throats were merely venting their spite when they accused Neil of having hid the treasure. Anyway, what were a few pieces of gold between friends? It may only have been coincidence but, about two hundred years later, in 1813, a pot of gold was dug up at Kirkibost in Bernera near where the *Priam* had berthed.

Now all seemed set fair for Neil. The King and the Council were smiling on him kindly for ridding the seas of a pest, and almost immediately afterwards, in February 1611, my Lord Kintail was gathered to his fathers and Lewis descended to his son, Cailean Ruadh,

a minor of only fourteen years. Looking after the young Lord's interests in the island was his uncle Ruari, and, at once, Neil decided to test the strength of the new regime.

His first foray was his last. None of his old friends on the main island gave their support and Ruari, the tutor of Kintail, chased the unsuccessful raiders back to their Birsay stronghold. To capture Birsay by force, the tutor saw, would mean a long blockade and a desperate assault. There was a simpler way. Rounding up all the women and children kin to Neil and his men from the main island, he marooned them at low-water on a rock within earshot of the besieged. Then he delivered his ultimatum. If, before the next high-water, Neil surrendered with all his followers, the hostages would be set free. If not, the tide would do its grim work slowly.

For the only time in his wild life Neil gave in. The tutor's terms were generous. Neil and his men were free to go where they would outwith the lands of Lewis. Before the next tide made, he and they moved sadly southwards to seek refuge with their kinsman Ruari MacLeod of Harris.

It was this same Ruari who had helped Neil to bring to an end the second venture of the Fife Syndicate, and from him he expected at least shelter and succour. But in Harris there had been a change of heart. Ruari lost no time in handing over to the tender mercy of the Privy Council the last hero of a lost cause. For this he had his reward. Back from his shameful journey to Edinburgh, he came no longer Ruari Mor, but the bold and well-beloved Sir Roderick of Harris.

On the 30th of March 1613 Neil stood his trial on a long calendar of charges, each a capital one. He did not deign to offer any defence, and there could be only one verdict. At the Market Cross in Edinburgh he kicked away the last of his life high above the jeering crowd. His head was struck from his body and stuck above the Nether Bow Port. And so Sir Thomas Hamilton was able at last to write to his King that the one who had been for so long his sworn enemy had gone to his last account 'verie Christianlie'.

The last ledger of the Syndicate of Gentlemen Adventurers of Fife was closed.



Jane Laughed at My Wedding

JEAN E. TURNLEY

JANE was born, as we all were, in the front bedroom at home, and there was no call for her to be any different from the rest of us. Yet she was. Right from the start, it seemed.

My mother always said that as soon as Jane was born the nurse put the baby down at the foot of the bed and went back to Mother. That was Nurse Milligan, of course, Dr Armitage being too late, as usual. And when she turned around to the baby again, Jane had her great big eyes open and was looking all around the room, and particularly at the roses on the wallpaper.

As a little girl, six years younger than Jane, and adoring her, I loved to hear the story of her birth, and I always thought it was no wonder Jane had gazed about at that momentous time. Mother's room was so lovely.

It had a cream satin-striped wallpaper, with those pink roses on it, and little bluebirds with ribbons in their beaks, perpetually flying. The dressing-table, wardrobe, and washstand were light oak, with carved leaves and berries and curly brass handles. The washstand had tiles with little blue Chinamen clapping their hands, and a blue-and-yellow jug and basin, and, best of all, a blue-and-yellow chamber to match!

The mantelpiece matched the bedroom suite, and had a lot of little bits of mirror that allowed fascinatingly-unusual glimpses of oneself. It was in three tiers. On the top tier were a blue vase filled with shivery grass, a photograph of Grandpa, and the Doctor's Book. I was not allowed to look at the book. The second tier had two volumes of Ella Wheeler Wilcox in limp blue leather, and in the middle was Mother's white prayerbook she had carried at her wedding. On the very bottom shelf was a photo of Dadda in a silver frame. Dadda wore a very heavy moustache. Mother, dusting the photo, would say: 'Of course, that was your father as a *young* man,' and sigh a little, so that for a long time I had the impression there was something sad about a very heavy moustache.

Finally, there was Mother's bed, which always seemed so terribly high when I was hauled in on Sunday mornings and fearsomely white with its marcella quilt and starched lace pillow-shams.

The room smelt of violet powder and Mother's hair, and I never thought it was very strange that the baby Jane had stared about, although Nurse Milligan declared the Sign

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was on it, and Jane would turn out to be something rare.

There was nothing very remarkable about Jane when she was just a little girl. She ran about with the other kids with her black curls flying, and ran after the cows, and brought in the eggs, and rode a pony bareback to school.

But at school she was best at drawing, and when she was twelve she won a scholarship and the schoolteacher came out to the farm to talk to Dadda, and Jane was sent away to school in town.

Up until then I don't suppose anyone in Regan's Swamp had expected Jane to do anything else except grow up and get married to some other farmer's son, but after that prize no one was ever surprised again, and Jane kept on winning prizes and doing things, and finally she became a wonderful designer.

Then she met a man, who was not only handsome and charming and good, but very wealthy; and they fell in love and got married.

That was Bradley Hyde, and when Jane brought him home I thought he must easily be the nicest man in the world and I should die if I didn't meet a man just like him. But, of course, I didn't. I met Mr Creswick.

IT was at the tin-kettling we gave to Nellie Tyler and Herb Hunt, the night they came back from their honeymoon.

We had all met at Honan's corner with our tins and it was time to go on to the house, when someone made the suggestion that the younger ones should walk, taking a short-cut through the paddocks and across the creek. It was midsummer and the moon was like day.

I didn't much want to go—I was never one for the more boisterous skylarking some of the lads favoured, but everyone else was enthusiastic. So we set off across the paddocks, about a dozen of us, everyone acting a bit silly, the way you do, with that sort of let-out-of-school feeling you get in open fields under the moonlight.

We cut across Creswick's point down to the creek, and just as we began to file down the cow-track someone came up from the flat below. It was Mr Creswick himself.

Although he was not old at all, no more than thirty then, Hal Creswick never came to the dances, and none of us knew him well.

He was black-and-white by the light of the moon, but I remembered he was very fair, with straight blond hair flat on his square head

and a fresh-coloured face. His expression always seemed rather anxious, as if he was eager to be on good terms with everyone. He had a nice deep voice with a suspicion of stammer.

His nice voice was saying: 'Tin-kettling, eh? I haven't—I don't think I've heard of tin-kettling since I was a boy—up north.'

Someone said: 'Why don't you come along?'

Mr Creswick said—I felt he was blushing: 'Oh—I say! Wouldn't I—' but everyone started urging him.

So he came. He stood aside and we went on down the track, and I was last, so he fell in behind me.

We said it was a nice night and very hot, and a few other things, and then no more, because I was as shy as Mr Creswick.

There was a deep hole in the arm of the creek that spanned Creswick's flat. A fallen tree bridged it, the old mossy trunk worn flat by crossing feet. The party trooped over, some of the girls squealing, and the boys trying to push each other in.

When I began to cross myself, I went three steps quite boldly out into the middle of the log, and then I could go no further! On the far side the others were scrambling heedlessly up the bank. Behind me Mr Creswick coughed. I had forgotten him.

Oh, if only I hadn't come! I would simply have to go down on my hands and knees and crawl over.

Mr Creswick said gently: 'What's—the matter?'

I whispered: 'I'm afraid.' It didn't seem to matter. He wasn't one of those terrible boys.

He came up the log closer to me. 'I'll steady you.'

I felt his hand on my arm, but my legs just would not move. Up there the moon swam in a milky sky, and down there was the water, black as ink. I knew I should fall in.

Mr Creswick said: 'Would you mind—if I—I could easily carry you?'

I didn't answer, but the next moment I felt Mr Creswick's firm arm under my knees and I put my arm up around his neck. He carried me the half-dozen steps and set me down on a rock on the other side.

'Oh,' I said shakily, 'I don't know what came over me. It has before, too!'

Mr Creswick was looking at me anxiously. 'There's a—word for it, isn't there?'

JANE LAUGHED AT MY WEDDING

I laughed. 'I'm not very strong on words.' 'Good! Neither am I.'

The others were calling us, and, laughing, we climbed up to join them. All together we crept up to the new barbed-wire fence across the back of the newly-weds house and laid our tins down ready. Sticks had been picked up at the creek. At a given signal we all fell to and a wild and dreadful cacophony shattered the spell of the moonlit night.

The back-door of the little house opened, and the light within showed us the bridegroom rushing out with mock ferocity, brandishing a shotgun.

Mr Creswick, beside me, said: 'By Jove, he looks—serious, doesn't he?' But it was only in fun, of course, and Nellie had a load of new-baked cakes, so it was clear they had been tipped off.

Herb hung hurricane-lamps along the wide verandah and we danced there, to old Mr Harrigan's concertina and Sammy Stewart on the mouth-organ. There were games, too, like the Parcel and Spin the Plate.

During the community singing I noticed Mr Creswick beside me where I sat at the end of the verandah. 'You're not singing,' I protested.

'I can't sing,' he confessed. 'I was—listening to you!'

I blurted: 'Oh, I'm terrible!'

'I thought you sang very nicely. You look so—happy, too. Tell me—do you—enjoy this sort of thing?'

I never have liked parties. I don't like crowds. It was no use denying it. I looked at him and said: 'There's a word for this, too, isn't there?'

'What's your word?'

'Well, perhaps—I think it's a bit—medi-
eval!'

He laughed outright. 'I never thought of it that way. I was only thinking—bucolic!'

I shook my head at him, warningly. 'Don't start. Jane would be a match for you, but not me!'

'Jane? That's your sister, isn't it? The designer?'

'Yes,' I said, proudly. 'How dearly I loved Jane!'

'She's—married now, isn't she?'

'Yes,' I said, happily. 'Yes. She married a marvellous man. He's terribly handsome and wealthy and everything, and it was awfully romantic. They met in Paris, in a café, and Jane just knew he was an Australian, and they

smiled at each other and they came back on the same ship and got married here. It was the most beautiful wedding—'

I was running on, when I remembered, all of a sudden, that once Mr Creswick had actually come to our house, more or less to call on Jane.

JANE was home on holidays, and Mother had been having one of her spasms of wishing Jane would come back home. Jane couldn't stand the country. She had grown away from us, loving us though she did, but she was bound heart and soul to the city. She could never see how Mother and I could get so much pleasure out of our simple little jaunts, and when she was home we would love to tell her of our doings, just to make her scream laughing and exclaim, and make her fond, malicious fun of us.

'Not a district picnic?' she would cry. 'With the Married Men's Race and the Ladies Stepping the Chain and everything? Oh, I just can't bear it! Did you take scones in a tea-towel?'

Or: 'Never another bazaar? Maril, you haven't taken the Jumble Stall again, have you? Mother doesn't still make those terrible string-bags?'

Mother had dragged Jane to Honan's clearing-sale, and there they met Mr Creswick, and there Mother was seized with the spirit of matchmaking and a solution to the problem of making Jane come back to the country.

Mr Creswick, Mother said, had taken to Jane, though Jane pooh-poohed it. He was a public schoolboy and a gentleman, and several other mildly snobbish things that put him near the exalted mark Mother had set for Jane. So he had been asked to drop over.

I remembered him now, sitting on the kitchen-sofa, looking very large on it, with his knees spread and his square hands on them and rather red in the face.

Jane had been abominable, sitting up primly and behaving exactly like a Victorian miss receiving a suitor. It had been a dreadful afternoon.

I was young enough to think it very funny, and when Mr Creswick had gone and Jane was wickedly mimicking his speech I had rolled with laughter on the sofa.

Mother, quite undismayed, asked brightly: 'Did you like him, pet?' and Jane had said: 'Oh, Mummy, I couldn't bear it! Those

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great, big hands! They'd be all moist and clammy, I bet!

I thought of Mr Creswick's hands touching me reassuringly, down on the log, and the feel of his hard neck under my bare arm. He hadn't been in the least clammy. He didn't look hot or clammy now, even. In fact, as I looked at him, I realised he was the most right-looking man in the place.

He had come, as he was, in a soft, open-collared shirt and a tweed jacket, not dressed up for the occasion like the others in their best hard navy serge suits and stiff striped collars and shiny shoes.

How could Jane have been so mean? Perhaps he had been hurt. I wondered if he'd carried her vision around in his heart, the way you read in books. I felt I must make it up to him, somehow. But when I turned to him, far from showing signs of secret sorrow, he was grinning broadly.

'Funny—you know, I rather fancied Jane myself, once. Just a fleeting idea—lasted about a day. I thought she was so dashed—pretty. But upon reflection I realised she'd be too—wearing—if you know what I mean. I could never go—fast—enough for her. No, I knew I'd have to—wait—for somebody—simpler.'

He was looking at me. I knew I should be defending Jane—beautiful Jane that any man should be thrilled to marry, whether she wore him out or not. But somehow I didn't want to talk, just listen.

He went on: 'The funny thing is—I don't remember you being there! *Were* you? I—mean to say you must have been, but you wouldn't think I could—overlook you, would you?'

I started to laugh. He was so funny, and nice.

They began to dance again. 'Would you?' Mr Creswick said. 'I—I can't do anything spectacular like young Flannigan there, but I can—I can turn at the corners quite skilfully!'

I stood up, still laughing, and his hands, which were not clammy, clasped mine, and his arm went solidly about my waist, and I stepped in close to his broad, safe chest.

'IT'S ridiculous!' Jane said, flexing her long elegant fingers and pushing them up through her hair again.

She was lying, as she always did, on the old

kitchen-sofa, her long slender legs sprawled indolently, playing the old game of 'Tell me', the way she always did when she came home.

'Tell me,' she would say, lighting one cigarette after another, 'who do you dance with at these dreadful hops?'

It was my part to be very placid. 'Well—I always save the sets for old Mr Underwood.'

'Mr Underwood! He must be ninety!'

'He's the best old-time-dancer in the district! I usually have the *Pride of Erin* with him too! And I have most waltzes with Russell Hart—'

Jane would start up, clutching her throat. 'Not that dreadful child who used to have Things in his head?'

'The same. He's a very nice boy!'

'Impossible! It's too much! Darling, you must come and live with me, in a civilised world!'

But I didn't want Jane's world.

Now she was going on in just the same way as I told her about my wedding. 'You *can't*!' she cried, dramatically, making me giggle. 'You can't just off and marry this creature that I don't remember at all!'

'He sat there, on the sofa,' I said, calmly, 'and you said you couldn't bear it—you knew he'd be all moist and clammy!'

Jane shrieked. 'Did I? Darling, I *am* sorry. How horrid of me, but he wasn't your beau then, and I was very young, wasn't I? I'm sure he wasn't, or he's grown out of it or something!'

'He might still seem like that to you, really,' I said, without rancour. 'I don't imagine he's changed. But he's all right for me.' I couldn't resist a smug dig: 'He's so nice and uncomplicated.'

'Are you sure you want someone uncomplicated?' Jane said, anxiously.

'Of course—I'm not you!'

'And you'll actually drag him miles over to little old St Jude's to get married?'

'Rather. I wouldn't dream of being married anywhere else!'

'But, Maril, darling, they'll all stand and gape at you, and no one will be able to shift old Mrs Abinger out of the front pew, and people will keep on getting up to take babies out, and the Vicar will come sleepily out of the vestry in one of his crumpled surplices to say: "*Dearly Beloved, we are gathered here—*" and looking round to count!'

Mother said: 'Jane!', but we were both laughing.

JANE LAUGHED AT MY WEDDING

'I can,' I said. 'It will be lovely. And I'll have the reception here, at home.'

'You'll have to ask all the neighbours, so you won't offend anyone.'

'I like all the neighbours.'

'Think of the aunts all squashed into the parlour at once, and people will keep taking the plates off the darns in the lace cloth—'

'You don't have to worry,' I said. 'All you've got to do is my dress.'

'H'm.' Jane's brilliant eyes went dreamy. 'You know, I could make you into something heavenly—'

BUT when I stood in front of Mother's mirror, in my wedding-dress, I bit my lips with disappointment. When the dress was sent home, Jane had written: 'I did intend to go all out-of-this-world with you, but decided a wedding-dress was best for you, after all.'

It was a wedding-dress, all right. It was just like any other wedding-dress. I couldn't help but feel Jane must have let one of the girls in her workroom design it. It was organdie, because the weather was hot, and frilly, and it had puff sleeves and a little flat, round collar that I thought was absolutely babyish. I was *not* a vision of loveliness in it. I was just myself in a white frock. And I had so *wanted* to be a vision of loveliness for Hal. Just this one day!

Why had Jane done this? Didn't she think it was worth while to make a real *Jane* creation for this little bushwhacking wedding? Was all that fun she had made of us more real than I thought?

It was a dreadful hot day and everyone was limp. The jellies wouldn't set, and even Mother got irritable.

Jane and Bradley arrived just before lunch, very gay and jaunty in Bradley's rakish car. They had brought my bouquet, but when we opened the box the flowers were already drooping.

Mother said: 'I'll just sprinkle it, pet, and put it away in the dairy to cool. By the time you're ready, you won't know them!'

But the flowers were still dejected enough when I took them up a few hours later, and gave a final desperate tweak to my hair, which had not curled softly, but had gone into a dry, brittle tangle.

Jane and Bradley were dressing in Jane's old room. They had been laughing while they dressed, and once, in a little moment of still-

ness, I heard Jane say, in her light, careless way: 'Poor little thing!' I knew she meant me.

The little bluestone church was like an oven as I came in, and all the faces turned around to gape at me, the way Jane said they would, and I was not proud and happy to have them gape at me, as I had hoped to be, but miserable and uncertain. 'Here I am,' I thought, 'a poor little thing, in a poor little dress and pathetic flowers, at my funny little wedding!' And I hated Jane for showing it to me that way.

Mr Carlson came forward, and his surplice was crumpled, and as he started the '*Dearly Beloved*' bit I noticed his cassock was caught up on one side.

In the feel of Jane, so close behind me, I could almost hear her voice telling one of her bright friends: 'My dear, and here was this dear little old country parson with his lace pinny tucked up!' And I heard her gay laugh. But it was not right. It was not right of her to laugh at my wedding.

Jane's wedding had been in a cathedral, lofty and solemn, and shining with candles and flowers banking the altar. There were choir-boys like little angels, totally unlike grubby Tommy Foote murdering '*O Promise Me*' along with the rest of the congregation.

Hal's neck was very red. I seemed to notice him then, for the first time. There was a little black beetle climbing up his collar. Jane was probably right. For all I knew he might have a clamminess in his nature I didn't know about. What was he, after all, but a farmer? His face was so anxious, it was almost funny. Jane would think so, anyway.

Hal's big fingers fumbled with the ring that was going to bind us for ever—when, maybe, I could have had someone dashing and romantic and enviable. The ring felt slippery on my finger. He must be perspiring and nervous. Perhaps he was as unhappy and uncertain as I was. I felt a little pang. I would make him more unhappy, and it was a shame, because he was nice. But it wasn't my fault. It was Jane's.

When we knelt to pray someone dropped a prayerbook with a loud thud. Hal gave a start and Jane moved, behind me. No one had done anything the least bit *gauche* at her wedding.

I wouldn't look at her as I turned to take back my bouquet, although I felt her willing me to look. To laugh at her laughing, as we

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had done so often before—before I knew there was meanness and malice in it.

We moved on, up to the altar, for the final prayers. Then we were man and wife, and it was done. I felt empty and cheated, and, worst of all, ridiculous!

In the vestry Mr Carlson became heavily jocular, and Hal blundered under my veil to kiss me. At the touch of his lips I shut my eyes, and my heart cried: 'It doesn't matter. He's mine and I love him, and it doesn't matter.'

Jane and Brad came in and I turned to them, suddenly filled with proud anger.

But there was Jane, grasping my arms, and her face was all warm and flushed and flurried,

not like Jane at all. 'Oh, darling! Oh, wasn't it lovely! You look just as I knew you would. A *real* bride! And the darling little church, and everyone we know is here! All really happy for you—'

'Did you like it?' I said, stupidly, staring.

'Like it? Oh, Maril, darling, it was just the sort of wedding I always wanted for myself.'

A glow of happiness, breakingly warm, filled my throat. The beauty of it seized me. My homely wedding. My perfect, simple frock. My solid, dependable groom.

I reached to kiss my sister, and held her tight. 'Jane,' I whispered, and I looked into her shining eyes, 'why, Jane, darling, you're crying!'

Doux Pays de France

*I bring your shadows on my feet and hands,
Your gleaming waters in my shining eyes;
Bearing your magic to familiar lands,
Bringing your brilliance unto darkened skies.*

*Hear how the notes of music in your speech
Haunt like an echo each accustomed sound,
As from the cities far beyond my reach
I cast your scented dust upon the ground.*

*With me there march the Merovingian kings,
The royal Crusader speaks me words of grace;
The sunburnt minstrel smiles on me and sings,
And Héloïse leans down her weeping face.*

*I strut a Bonaparte in every street,
The eagles fan me and the drums delight,
Marching to Paris, aching eyes and feet,
Drunk with the battle-song I chase the night.*

*Now here at home I see the poplars rise,
The coffee-scented morning mists my brain,
As, patterned in the torn and gusty skies,
I see the fabled rivers once again.*

*Deep-chasmed Tarn, the royal and purple Rhone,
Gironde, in dreams a cataract of wine,
The little stream that once I called my own,
And silver Seine, whose green banks once were mine.*

*Fair land with all your imperfections dear,
Sweet earth, not mine, yet ever mine to hold,
When I was young I kept you ever near,
And hold you closer as my heart grows old.*

KENNETH MACGOWAN.

Destination—Russia

CLIVE COOKSON

AFTER being battered and butted by fierce gales for many days, and swooped upon by Russian patrol-boats during the night, it came as a great relief when land hove to on the starboard bow.

On arrival at the pilot station we dropped anchor to await the customs launch and inevitable search. Woman officials did the searching, and once cleared we weighed anchor and continued our journey to Archangel. It was snowing heavily. Snow lay thick on both shores, and the wind whipped it into miniature whirlpools.

Once alongside, we set watches to tally timber, six on and six off, and when my watch was finished I prepared to go ashore with Flash-ka, my room-mate, who retained the sobriquet we had given him in the Russian port of Igarka on the previous voyage.

Flash-ka and I got our passes from the master and walked the good mile to the dock-gates. A Russian woman stood guard with a rifle slung across her back. She blasted us verbally, in Russian, for trying to walk through the gate without first handing her our discharge-books and passes. Having passed through the gate, we stood in the town of Solombala, which had, we were told, a population of over two million people, and lay about five miles from Archangel.

It was like a Western town that had sprung up overnight, and the roads were all mud and slush, a foot deep, and, without suitable shoes, impossible to walk upon. Instead of a pavement, there ran through the town a wooden platform, wide enough for two to walk abreast.

A lorry stuck in the road. Flash-ka and I went to the rescue, our sea-boots sinking deep. We assisted in freeing it and then, further along, it stuck again. Once more we freed it, but when it stuck again we left it and walked on.

Along what was presumably the main road we passed a group of women road-workers, all

of them in their late forties. They scraped the mud and slush from the road and filled the holes with bricks, covering the bricks, once knocked flat, with a layer of sand.

The women who walked to and fro on the wooden platform were plainly dressed and wore vivid lipstick and bright powder and looked like grotesquely-painted dolls. The children with them looked wonderfully happy and warm in their fur clothes.

We peeped inside a barber's shop and saw women cutting men's hair and shaving faces. All the buildings and houses were old-fashioned and made of wood. The trams that rattled along were decrepit and a disgrace.

We stopped on a wooden bridge that was being swept by women and looked below at the water that would be frozen over in only a few days. Women knelt in the snow on the riverbanks, a basket by their sides, and washed their clothes in the cold water. Close by, women queued for water that issued from outdoor fountains, water that was yellow and came from the river. I was told that the Russian peasant had no running water in his house.

'What a ghastly undeveloped place!' growled Flash-ka.

'This is only what might be termed as the suburbs of Archangel,' I replied. 'Archangel must be a paradise!'

I found the walk back to the ship a very tiresome one, and if it had not been for the marks we had left in the snow on the street-corners it would have taken us even longer than two hours to return.

AFTER dinner we were informed that a bus would arrive at the ship's gangway to take us to the International Club. The club was run by the government for the use of all visiting seamen.

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At seven o'clock the bus had not yet arrived, so Flash-ka and I decided to make our own way there. Returning from our walk ashore, we had visited a British ship and got much useful information from the crew about the club and Archangel in general.

It was dark, and snow fell in large flakes as we took the same path to the gate where the same woman stood guard. As soon as we were outside the gate we were repeatedly asked for English or American cigarettes, or spirits of any kind. Russian cigarettes were thirty shillings for twenty, so if a Russian could buy fifty cigarettes from a seaman for about a pound he was doing a good business—the seaman not so good, for a pound will only buy him three bottles of beer. The information we had obtained proved to be quite true, and soon we were offered four pounds for the shirts we wore!

More for a laugh than anything else, Flash-ka offered his necktie, and to his surprise received ten rubles, which was roughly one pound. But first, for we had been warned, he examined the note under the street-light to see the date. With a laugh he handed it back to the Russian. The date on the note was 1943, and anything printed before 1947 was useless. After the war there was so much counterfeit money in circulation that the Russian government declared all paper-money obsolete, and announced that a new issue would be printed. I was also told, at the club, that people holding their money at home got practically nothing for it, while people with money in the bank received something like ten pounds for every hundred they had.

The Russian offered Flash-ka another note, but Flash-ka ignored him and we continued down the wooden platform. Outside the tram-stop we watched men and women buying pints of beer. The women looked ludicrous holding pint glasses.

We made a good start by getting on the wrong tram. But one thing we soon discovered was that everyone knew the International Club. The Russians, however, called it the Inter-Club.

'What do we do for money?' Flash-ka asked.

'Remember what we were told—that tourists travel free?' I said.

'But it would be handy if we had money.'

'Don't worry—I've got a fair amount of English with me.'

We finally embarked on the correct tram.

The ride was unforgettable. It was like an old mule-train for speed, and a scenic-railway for twists, bends, and bumps. After spending a hectic twenty minutes on the tram, the conductress, with a roll of tickets on her machine like a miniature toilet-roll, said 'Con-yetts'. It was one of the many words we had learnt to recognise by ear but not to spell, and it meant 'finish', so off the tram we jumped, finding ourselves facing a long and dark wooden bridge.

'What now?' asked Flash-ka.

'Let's cross the bridge first,' I suggested.

The bridge was long and decrepit, and at the far end came waves of Russian opera. It seemed quite a common thing to hear music blaring from loud-speakers all over the town.

On reaching the other side of the bridge we discovered that to get to the Inter-Club you had to catch a bus that came across the very bridge over which we had walked! We waited for some fifteen minutes among the Russians, who gave us curious glances, and finally the bus pulled up, a small, snub-nosed vehicle, capable of seating eighteen people.

Finally, after all the queue had disappeared on the bus, Flash-ka and I managed to squeeze just sufficiently inside to allow the doors to close. It was a rough ride, full of skids, and again for long periods we were objects of amusement. Whether it was my half-grown beard or Flash-ka's duffle-coat I do not know, but something about us obviously occasioned hilarity.

When the bus pulled up alongside a stop, I climbed down to allow a man to debark. Before I could climb back again a Russian woman had pushed past me and filled the space by the door. Flash-ka looked at me in alarm, knowing I stood no chance of getting back on the bus. But suddenly the conductress, a huge woman, pushed her way to the front and slapped the woman who had taken my place across the face, abusing her in her own tongue. She then turned to me and snapped out something harsh, beckoning me on board. Feeling guilty, and avoiding the slapped woman's eyes, I crawled back in the bus. The driver then closed the automatic doors and trapped my finger. I pulled it away. A lump of skin was missing, and it was already bleeding. I sucked it and watched the Russians stare at me more than ever.

Next came the big shock—the conductress asked us for our fares. Obviously the free rides could be obtained only on trams. I

DESTINATION—RUSSIA

shrugged my shoulders and said: 'Nee-pon-yee-my'ah', which meant I did not comprehend. She started cursing, her face red, so I searched for my money with my right hand while I sucked the bleeding hole in my left. I handed her half-a-crown, and she looked at it as though it were a dead rat. I offered her five shillings, and she made a movement of disgust with her lips and stamped her foot in vexation. I offered her ten shillings, and she started cursing again and took some Russian money from her pocket to show just what currency and how much she wanted.

I shrugged and offered her my pass and discharge-book, hoping she would keep neither, as a very heavy fine was imposed for their loss. Her face twisted in contempt and I thought she was going to hit me. She turned to the Russians in the bus and started shouting, and as she shouted they watched us, their faces straight, and I could almost translate her words: 'English dogs! Underpaid and underfed! See what they do—steal a ride on a bus and no money with which to pay their small fare.' I found afterwards that it was eight shillings—but only Russian money!

When we arrived at Archangel the conductor put us off the bus, contempt still in her eyes. It was then that I remembered what the bosun always said: 'Go ashore anywhere in the world as though you were off to see the Queen.' That we had done. 'All seamen are potential ambassadors, and on your behaviour, you the minority, they judge the majority.' We had failed him in our behaviour.

WE now turned our eyes to Archangel and saw something similar to Solombala, excepting perhaps the roads. They were tarmac and full of holes; and there was a wide pavement. Trams, the same as in Solombala, rattled along on rickety lines.

We asked for and were directed to the Inter-Club, a place we had by then given up hope of finding. Russians accosted us, asking if we had American and English cigarettes—anything we would like to sell. Just in case we had to go back the same way, Flash-ka sold his tie for ten rubles, making sure the date was good on the note. He had only just completed the deal, when the police arrived. At their behest the Russians scattered, leaving us to walk our own way, but from then until we disappeared into the Inter-Club we were followed at a distance by the police.

The Inter-Club consisted of about eight large rooms in a four-storey building. The rooms were well decorated and silk curtains were laced up in the windows. Many larger-than-life oil-paintings of great Russian leaders adorned the walls. Also on the walls were boasts of Russian achievements. One of them read:

The total capacity of hydroelectric power-stations in the U.S.S.R. during the five years 1951-1955 will be approximately trebled.

On one wall I saw the names and photos of the International Stalin Prize winners for the promotion of peace among nations. One was Hewlett Johnson, Dean of Canterbury.

To my way of thinking, the club catered mostly for the British, even though sailors of all nationalities were there. The reason for my supposing so was that everything on the walls that needed a caption was in English. Even the books in the library were mostly English, though every language in the world seemed to be there. Incidentally, you could take books, free of charge, and these were chiefly stories of Russia, in English, and beautifully bound, some in leather and worth at least two pounds each.

Games were in abundance—table-tennis, draughts, chess, billiards, and so on. Each night a film was shown, and each night in a different language. There was also dancing, a bar—three bottles of beer for a pound—and an attractive girl to talk to.

Flash-ka disappeared, so I found myself a girl whom I could bombard with questions. We sat in the overstuffed armchairs. 'What do the dock-workers do when the river freezes over and is not navigable?' I asked.

'They work in the mills,' she replied. 'There is much work—so much in fact that they are obliged to work more than their normal hours. That is why, say, a mother of four children goes to work, putting her children in a nursery. There is too much work in our country.'

'It's a pity they don't speak English,' I said.

'The common people don't bother to learn a language,' she said.

'What do you do for a living?' I asked.

'I am a chartered accountant. Most of the girls in the club go to the university. They come here to try their languages and help towards inspiring peace among nations.'

'Why is Solombala so "ancient"?' I said, unable to think of a more polite word. 'Why, in fact, is Archangel so much behind

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other countries in roads and public transport?"

"It was a long war," she replied, "and in ten years the whole town will be rebuilt. Nothing was done to it during the war."

"Other countries have entirely rebuilt their cities and towns."

She eyed me somewhat haughtily. "Solombala and Archangel are over three hundred years old," she said. Then: "How did you get here?"

I explained about the trouble.

"Do not worry, a bus will take you back to your ship, and each night it will call for you. The club is open until 2 a.m., and it is a social night on Wednesdays."

DURING the few visits I paid the club I found that the girls were very pleasant, and most were susceptible to a pair of nylons. I saw two foreign films, and a girl sat between Flash-ka and myself, and translated for us. I found the Russians to be simple people, all full of 'peace'; in fact, the club had an atmosphere that could be called 'peace'. I liked them—I liked them all.

One night an American film, a very old one, was being shown.

"Do you want an interpreter?" asked a hostess.

"I'm English," I said.

"Then I shall sit by you and translate."

"But it's English that's being spoken," I insisted.

"No," she said, "it is American."

"What's the difference?"

"The American language is much faster than the English and the words more hard to understand—contained in no dictionary. I even get muddled myself."

"Then sit down," I told her, "and I'll translate to you. I speak American very well!"

The hostesses were very shrewd when dealing with the Don Juans who came to the club. In company one night I listened to one of my shipmates feeling for a soft touch. He said to one of the club girls: "I've always wanted to go inside a Russian house."

Silence.

My ears started to go red, for I knew what he was playing for, and it embarrassed me.

"I've always wanted to see inside a Russian house," he persisted. "D'you think I could?"

She gave him half a smile. "Knock on any door," she replied, "and you'll be welcome!" and she turned on her heel.

I also listened to the story of a sorrowful shipmate who had the bad luck to get arrested. He had heard about this Russian vodka and decided he would try it. He sold his shirt and a pair of gloves for six pounds, and then went to town. The vodka did more than get him drunk—it also made him want to fight: it also got him a free night's lodgings in a strait-jacket.

He says he started to fight a Swede, and the next thing he knew he was half-strangled by a Russian policeman. They marched him off to gaol and made him strip naked. Then they put him on a bench and tied him down with tapes, a sort of strait-jacket.

Afraid of the salt-mines, he had screamed and yelled until a woman came and pushed a chloroform-soaked wad under his nose. He held his breath, he said, and after a while the wad was taken away—and he remained quiet. The next morning the woman came and untied him. He was then taken to another cell and given his clothes. The woman took as much notice of him as if he had been one of her own sex.

He dressed and waited, and was finally taken to an interpreter, who told him he was fined forty roubles (four pounds), and after he had filled up a great many forms he was allowed to leave. "Vodka," said he, "is very good—good, that is, for cleaning drains!"

THE day arrived for sailing, and I cannot say I was sorry, for it was desperately cold and the river had frozen over. Snow lay thick on the ground, and the Russians bustled to and fro as though it were summer. They were warmly dressed, but they never showed signs of being in the least inconvenienced by the weather. Soon we were cracking the ice as we pushed on down river, ice that shattered and mounted up like an earthenware waterfall.

As we made towards home, that beautiful piece of land called England, I could imagine the Soviet national anthem being sung in Russia:

*Sing to our Motherland, glory undying,
Bulwark of peoples in brotherhood strong!
Flag of the Soviets, peoples' flag flying,
Lead us from vict'ry to victory on!*

I prayed that what I had seen with my own eyes was true—that the Russian people were peace-loving, that they wanted, above all else, PEACE.



A Posy of White Violins

ROBERT O. HOLLES

ON the sixteenth of this month is when I always think of my mother saying 'Bring us back a pheasant,' and I'll tell you why. That day was the very day my father was called up to the depot during the war, and that was the last time I ever heard her say 'Bring us back a pheasant.'

We always used to say that to my father when he was going out anywhere on his own, ever since a certain day during the unemployment when we weren't so well off for something to eat, and my father went out one night when it was pitch-dark and bucketing down rain and said with a wink that he was going to bring us back a pheasant. Well, that particular time we couldn't go to bed, and just sat in the front-room, and my mother was knitting and I was trying to read a boy's magazine. All the time I was expecting to hear my mother say: 'Go to bed now, David.' But she didn't.

My father came back about four o'clock in the morning, soaked to the skin, with a rabbit. The rabbit was only small, about half-grown. He said: 'There weren't any pheasants.'

Next day we ate the rabbit, but my mother refused to touch it. She said: 'I'm not going to eat poached food for nobody.' And

my father said he could hardly bear to look at it in the daytime. So I had the most of it myself.

We didn't know until that day when the orders came from the War Office that my father had volunteered at all. He simply went off and did it without telling a soul. At the time he was nearly forty-eight, and I was seventeen. Naturally, I wasn't very pleased when I first knew. 'It's just like my father,' I was thinking, 'to skip right into the limelight in front of me.'

When I asked him why, all he said was that Kitchener asked him personally. It was in the afternoon, when he was messing about in the garden, trying to train some roses around the ventilation-pipe which comes up out of the soakaway.

I said: 'That war's all over and done with, years ago.'

He said: 'Then they ought to hang the Kaiser.' Nobody could get any sense out of him, that day.

HE was catching the train at half-past eight and it wasn't before seven that he even started to pack. We both had to help, otherwise he would never have known where

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anything was. My mother picked up his razor and said, sarcastic: 'You'd better take this with you—they're very keen on it in the army.'

My father said: 'It doesn't actually make much difference whether you fight with a beard or clean-shaven.'

My mother said: 'You never fought anybody in your natural life.'

'Yes I did,' he said, and did a bit of shadow-boxing there in the bedroom. 'I fought Charlie Vogler once.'

'Once,' my mother said. 'I'm not surprised.'

We both just stood there watching him and hearing his whistle, which was just like a draught coming through his teeth from nowhere. Then my mother started to laugh.

A few minutes before eight my father started off, and I went with him as far as the station, but my mother stayed right on the front doorstep. She said she didn't want to get out in the wind with her cold on her. There was a wind used to come skittering round the corner from Maple Crescent which was enough to stop your breath.

My father was wearing Uncle Jack's black bus-inspector's coat which my Aunt Jess had sent on after the funeral, after making my father promise that he wouldn't get rid of it to a stranger, and he always wore it for what he said were sentimental reasons, although it was too big; and my mother had to cut off all the silver buttons before he would put it on.

When we left, my mother was standing holding the door half-open, which was her way of shielding things from the neighbours, and my father gave her his usual peck of a kiss and said: 'Let me know if there's anything good on the wireless next week,' and he winked at me and said: 'Cheerio, then.' As he walked up to the garden-gate, he didn't look back, but only held up his hand with a jerk and wagged it. That was when my mother called out after him: 'Bring us back a pheasant.'

I walked by the side of him, carrying his old case which he'd got cheap one time we all went down for the week-end to Bognor Regis. Down the road I was feeling very excited, not with the usual kind of excitement of expecting something to happen, but with something I didn't quite know what, very deep. So consequently every time I saw something just above my head, like a limb of a

tree or the bracket on a lamp-post, or one of those blue signs which say: 'You may telephone from here,' I was jumping up and making a grab at it with the tips of my fingers. And after a while my father said in a rather tired kind of voice, but a bit sharp: 'Don't do that, son.' It was one of those times which brought me up with a bit of a shock, when I realised all of a sudden that Dad was my father. It's a funny way of saying it, but the truth is that most of the time I never thought of him like that. He was always with me—right next door, so to speak. For instance, when we used to go to the football, he'd shout just as loud as I did, and there wasn't any difference between us. But there was when he said: 'Don't do that, son.'

After that there was a bit of a silence, because I was feeling very fresh and excited, and didn't exactly like being told off. Then I began to feel rather sorry for him, padding along on the outside of the pavement in his big coat, so I said: 'Dad, sorry you've got to go.'

All the time I was expecting him to say something like: 'Don't forget to look after your mother, David,' and I was all set to tell him not to worry about that part of it. But all I remember him saying was something about it being a bit too late for an evening paper.

FROM our place to the station wasn't very far, and we didn't have to go into the town, so it was quiet in the streets. Admittedly there was quite a breeze, but it was warm and friendly, and I can remember looking up and seeing the sky full of long streaks of red in the shape of cigars. Just before turning into Station Road we stopped at the Holly Tree, which was a place I didn't particularly like, because the landlord suspected that I was a little under the legal age for drinking. So when I went in behind my father I wrinkled up my face to look old and stern.

Inside the public bar there was only an old man drinking up by himself, and two tarts—a fat piece who was known in the town as Mimmer Todd and a stringy-looking woman with bright apple-red cheeks. The stringy-looking woman I hadn't seen before. She was making up in front of a mirror which had written on it 'Inde Coope and Allsop'.

My father walked straight up to Mimmer Todd and gave her a flick on the backside.

A POSY OF WHITE VIOLINS

He said: 'You here boozing again, Mimmer?'

She squealed and smacked, too late, at his hand. 'Strike me, Dot,' she said, 'look at what's just been dragged in out of the wet.'

'Now, now,' my father said, wagging his finger, 'that's not very much the sort of thing I'd expect from a lady.'

Mimmer picked up her stout and said: 'Lady your Royal Canadian.'

My father said: 'Mimmer, the boy's here.'

The other tart looked round at me and patted her hair. She said: 'Well—"Good-night, Vienna!"'

I didn't like her saying that. She had streaks of blue in her hair, and I believe she was much harder than Mimmer, who had a very large front and looked like a sort of universal mother-type. While I was still trying to think of an adequate answer, my father drained off his glass and shook my elbow. 'We'll have to get off.'

AFTER hustling me out into the street, he didn't seem to care, but strolled along slowly, humming. Down Station Road he stopped outside a small grocer's and florist's, Martin and Plummer's. Rattling the knocker on the door, he shouted: 'Mrs Plummer!'

In a minute or two she opened a window upstairs and peered from behind the plastic curtains. 'What do you want this time of night?'

'A posy,' he said. 'Some white violets.'

'We're closed!' She banged the window shut. I believe she was annoyed at being seen with her hair in curls. When my father was just turning away, she opened it again and shouted down: 'Is it important?'

'Yes,' he said.

'We haven't got any violets—they finished months ago.'

'Well, it doesn't matter,' he called up. 'Anything will do. Violets if you like.'

She said: 'I'm coming down.'

Then she came downstairs and let us into the shop, grumbling and making the most of it. 'I've only got a bit of lilac and a few lilies. Take it or leave it.'

They were all together in a bucket, sur-

rounded by potted geraniums. My father took a large bunch of the lilac, and handed it to me. Outside the shop he said: 'When you get home give them to your mother.'

I was glad he hadn't said: 'I'll take the lilies,' and I thought of it very hard just at that time, because I was almost overcome with fright at the possibility of my father making so strange a gesture. I thought: 'I'm glad he didn't take the lilies, I'm glad he didn't take the lilies.'

When I walked up behind him into the station the wind was whistling around there so sharp it caught in the bunch of lilac and scattered the little mauve blossoms up and down the platform. If the train had happened to be on time, my father would never have caught it. When the signal went down, I remembered the small packet in the envelope and gave it to him. My mother had given it to me just before we went. She said: 'Give these to your father on the station, because I don't want him to forget—it's only a packet of aspirins for his headaches.'

He was rather impatient tearing the paper, what with the train drawing in. On being confronted with the packet of aspirins he turned them over in his fingers. The wrapping fell out of his hand and blew on to the rails. 'Good God!' he said, and slipped the packet into the huge ticket-pocket in the coat. I never saw such a look on his face, almost a look of pain or even fright. 'Excuse me a minute,' he said, and walked into the 'Gentlemen's'. He was out in a second, looking quite his normal self. In the train all he said was 'Cheerio, son,' and before I could even shout back he disappeared in the corridor.

I watched until the red light of the train was level with the signal-box. Walking back was lonely. I was embarrassed, too, carrying the flowers, and walked very fast by the Holly Tree just in case Mimmer Todd came out with the other one.

My mother kept the lilacs in the house for a fortnight. Then she threw them out. I believe she thought it was a waste of money—there was a lilac-tree in the garden by the back-wall. She said: 'I never give dead flowers houseroom.'

Twice-Told Tales

LXXI.—London's Mud-Houses

[From *Chambers's Journal* of November 1856]

I HAVEN'T kept my eyes shut when I have been at my work of finishing and decorating, and one consequence is that I have witnessed many of the tricks and scandals of the builders. It is not an unusual thing for the plaster of a new London house to change from white to a dirty brown, or to fall off the wall or ceiling in patches; and many a tenant has been astonished by the bad smells in rooms which have never been inhabited. There's a reason for everything, if you only knew it. Did you ever see scavengers scooping up the mud in the streets after a rainy day? This mud they call 'micmac'; and rare slimy stuff it is, as you have found out, if you have ever been splashed by it. The men of the broom cart it away to secret places, where great heaps of it are accumulated, and when dry enough to be sifted, they sell it to the *builders*. But what do the builders do with it? I'll tell you. They pass it through a sieve, to free it from stones and other coarse-grained refuse; then to forty bushels of the pulverised micmac they add a bushel or two of lime: and what then? Why, then they use it for plastering the walls and ceilings of new houses.

There's economy in this. Mud is cheaper than lime, and besides, owing to its cohesiveness, the cost of cow-hair is saved, and the labour of mixing it in. The tenacious mud will be sure to stick to the walls, at least it will do so long enough to answer the builder's purpose; so you see nothing could be better. And what an admirable way of utilising street-sweepings!—one that I would recommend to the attention of our Metropolitan Board of Works. What matter that your bedroom smells like a dead-house, or worse, every time

the weather becomes damp; that the offensive odour turns you sick, should there be a prevalence of rain; that the paper which your wife always admired, because it was so 'nice a pattern', grows blotchy with foul stains, hideous to look on? What matter, I say, if mud can be turned to such profitable account, and your builder is enabled to keep his phaeton? In your innocence, you have always thought that none but savage tribes—such as the Grimphisogs and Rawgrubgobblers—dwelt in mud-houses, and you won't be very willing to believe that here, in this world-renowned London, you have been living in a mud-house ever since the day you brought your blushing Marian home from the honeymoon.

Possibly the notion of such a thing may shock you. But try to forget all the abominations that go to the composition of micmac, and imagine it a compound of the dust of an imperial Cæsar or two, to say nothing of dukes, barons, and members of parliament, and you will be consoled.

I read once in a periodical that the cause of bad smells in rooms was the many thicknesses of paper on the walls, the new having been pasted over the old till the accumulation began to ferment. I didn't believe it, because I knew better. Take my word for it, if the walls are all right, you may 'stick up', as they say in Staffordshire, a new layer of paper every year as long as you live without any offence to your olfactories. But how can walls be sound or wholesome when, as I have seen, the mortar is one part lime and three parts mould—when, as I have also seen, the labourers, to save themselves trouble, slake the lime with water dipped from a filthy sewer!



How God Feels

PETER PATTERSON

I USED to wonder how God feels. Feels about us, down here. Feels when he is watching us. Feels when he sees us going wrong and suffering. I don't wonder any more. I know now. I found out when I was working for Adam Adams, the big builder.

We were building a big dock beside a big river. First of all we dug a hole so big that it was like a football stadium. I was a crane-driver on top. All day I sent my arm into the hole and brought out clay and mud by the ton. There were many arms and many days and many tons. We just dipped in and pulled out. We dipped in empty and pulled out full. The hole was swarming with men, filling us up. They were some good men. They were some happy men, confused men, straight men, unhappy men. They were working, fighting men.

I got to know those men through watching, from my crane. I got to know the cowards, the bullies, the timid, the brave, the happy. I got to know them all.

And I just dipped in empty and pulled out full. All summer.

THE autumn brought the rains, the winds, and the last load of clay. And the steel

men came. All shouting and big and hard and dangerous. Like steel. The lorries came in with the steel piles trailing along behind, with a piece of rag tied on the end, like ox-tails.

Now I had to put the steel down into the hole.

And the men followed it. They built a wall of steel around the hole—with such hammering and clanging that you couldn't think. And the cranes were blowing steam and water and smoke the way they worked.

And then the joiners and the concrete men, and the slingers, and the cement men, and the scaffolders. They all got in that hole and worked. In the rain, all autumn.

There was steel and wood and junk and concrete on the hole floor now. All wet with rain. And men in short raincoats and hats. Wet.

ONE day in November the wind was blowing harder and the clouds were low and wet. The rain had sleet and snow in it. It wrapped the steel up with dirty, wet white. We worked hard and got cold and numb hands. At high tide the river came seeping fast into the hole at the far end. The bosses were there getting the men to lay down the

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

concrete before the river got too high. Everybody was running about. Black macs in the wind and rain.

I saw Joe McDermott hurry past the crane. He had his bag on his shoulder.

'Hey, Joe.'

He stopped and grinned and shouted hard because the wind was against him.

'Are you knocking off, Joe?'

He shook his bag. 'No. I'm going for some firewood.'

'You need it this weather. How is the wife, Joe boy?'

'Pretty good. Any day now.'

'You'll need the firewood. Keep the kettle boiling. I've boiled some water in my day.'

'You've got five haven't you, Cranes?'

'That's right, boy. They keep on coming.'

'I'm scared.'

'You'll be O.K., boy. Don't worry.'

'Thanks, Cranes. So long.'

'So long, Joe.'

I WATCHED him go, and worked the arm. He went down the ladder into the hole. He was taking a bit of joiner's wood for the fire at home. He was a good boy. The firewood was good for winter and bringing babies.

It was over the other side of the hole, across the steel piles, where the joiners were working.

Joe reached the bottom of the ladder and started to walk around the steel. But he saw the bosses. So he stopped. He thought a bit and then started to cross the steel.

I stopped working the arm. He was just a black thing crossing steel covered in wet sleet. But I knew him. He was Joe McDermott. The bag was swinging on his shoulder, so he had to hold it with one arm. He would jump, one, two, three, from steel pile to steel pile. He was trying to keep an eye on the bosses.

Careful, Joe, careful, boy. It's slippery. This is a strong wind. Are those piles safe, Joe? Careful. You are halfway now. This rain. That pile. Is it locked in? No. It's on its own. It isn't held. Joe, Joe, Joe! 'No, Joe!'

You cannot hear. One, two, three, Joe.

Joe jumped and landed on the loose pile. His bag flew in the air. He skidded down on the ice steel—and landed down in a black heap. Dead.

They carried him around the steel. The concrete gang had to work on because the river was coming in fast. They carried him up the ladder to the top and past the crane.

I saw you going, Joe, and you didn't hear. I saw the danger, Joe, and I tried to tell you.

They took him away and I took watch over the hole again.

I know how God feels.

Meditations on a Theme by Keble and Tennyson

*My life is dull, the common task
Is nothing like what I would ask;
If more assistance could be found
I would forgo the trivial round.*

*And all day long with eyelids dropped,
No bedrooms swept, no kitchen mopped,
I'd lie, my chores neglecting wholly,
On beds of amaranth and moly.*

*But as I wield my mop I muse,
Since musing's free, which I would choose:
Would I, if asked, with Keble marry,
Or with the Lotos-Eaters tarry?*

*I think for Keble I'd decide,
The common task we'd thus divide;
But once let lotos-eating pall,
Then I'd be cooking for them all.*

F. M. H. B.

Science at Your Service

POLYTHENE DOILIES

THE doily has survived where many other Victorian items of domestic ornamentation have vanished. Indeed, one particularly modern domestic fashion, the use of dining-tables without a covering cloth, has raised the function of dish table-mats of one form or another from one of decoration to one of essentiality. However, where the doily type of mat is used nowadays, it tends to be a paper or similar imitation of the onetime lace-made article. Recently a London firm has produced polythene-made doilies with delicate lace patterns. These are white and offered in rectangular or oval tray sizes, or in round plate doily sizes of various diameters between 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ and 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. There is a range of these lace pattern designs. The doilies are all washable. Although they can therefore be used over and over again, with excellent prospects of a long life, they cost only a few pence each.

A KEY SERVICE

There is nothing particularly new about this product from a technical angle or from the viewpoint of design, but an article simple in itself has been associated with a useful after-sales service. Briefly, the product is a chain to carry keys. The chain is attached to a blank key which carries an individual serial number. Anybody buying one of these chains receives a form on which he may then give his name and address together with the number on the blank key; this information is kept filed by the makers. If the ring containing keys is lost, the finder, through information stated on the blank key, is asked to forward the ring and keys to the manufacturers, who will pay a reward for this. Thus, the chance of lost keys being returned is at least greatly increased. The price of the ring with its chromium-plated blank key is only a few shillings; in fact, it is appreciably lower than the sum offered as a reward to finders. Incidentally, the end of the blank key is designed so that it may operate as an emergency screwdriver.

A TIPPING BARROW

A new barrow, which is U-shaped, may be of interest to gardeners. Its most interesting feature is that it is a tipping barrow, controlled by a hand-lever. Simple operation of this lever tips the container into a horizontal position. The barrow has a two-wheel chassis. Also, with this design, weight is moved from the arms of the user to the wheels. The barrow is made of steel and electrically welded. It may also be useful in small workshops, factories, or indeed anywhere where material has to be shifted in bulk fairly frequently. The price is remarkably low for an appliance of this kind.

A COFFEE-GRINDER

Considerable attention is being paid to-day to methods of making coffee, but from the domestic maker's viewpoint all of these start with ground coffee. As is well enough known, much of the problem of coffee flavour, at any rate to those who might be described as connoisseurs of coffee, is to be found in this basic material. Changes, presumably connected with oxidation, begin when the beans are ground into powder; against this, the sealed vacuum-tin method of packing gives good storage protection, but once the tin has been opened air can reach the coffee. A coffee-grinding machine, developed in Italy, is now available in this country. It has a maximum charge capacity of half-a-pound of beans. It is made of chromium-plated metal, with glass receptacles fitted with plastics-made lids. It may be supplied either as a table model or for wall-fitting. The mill weighs about 6 pounds and has a height of 11 inches; it is electrically operated, with its own motor for AC or DC, 230-250 volts. It will enable reasonably small batches of ground coffee to be quickly made from beans. However, it is fair to point out that the appliance cannot be described as low in price, though it may indeed interest fresh coffee enthusiasts. It would certainly seem to be well worth considering by small hotels, boarding-houses, and the like.

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ROOM-HEATING WITH OIL

Recent surveys of the future fuel situation both in this country and Europe have shown very clearly that the demand for solid fuels must increasingly exceed their likely rate of supply. More and more mechanisation plus generally rising standards of living call for more power and more heating. Europe, once an exporter of coal, has become an importer; and this is true of this country, despite our rich deposits of coal. It is unlikely that power from atomic fission will greatly ease the load on solid fuel for a long time to come. Oil is the more likely balancing factor, although most of the oil Europe uses, and all that Britain uses, must be imported. This trend is already showing itself quite vigorously. Oil as a fuel for heating is more commonly used in hotels, offices, private houses, and factories each year.

A new room-heating stove-shaped appliance operating on diesel oil and able to fit within the hearth-space of most types of domestic fireplace is now available. The oil-tank holds just over 2 gallons; combustion is said to be entirely free from odour, all fumes and gases passing through the flue into the chimney. The maximum output is high, 21,000 B.Th.U. per hour, and this can be regulated by six gradations down to the minimum output of 9000 B.Th.U. per hour. No flame is visible with the cheaper standard model, but this feature is made possible for the *de luxe* model. The stove, if stove is quite the right word for this space-heater, is made in Germany, but sold here through a British-based company.

A POCKET-SIZED STAPLER

The stapling method of joining together sheets of paper has long been used in offices, and for a variety of purposes it is far better than using paper-clips. People whose private work involves a certain amount of clerical chores, professional workers, writers, secretaries of committees, etc., often have what might be called semi-office arrangements in their homes; here the normal office-sized stapler would probably seem too big an appliance for the amount of use it would have. A new pocket-sized stapler is therefore to be welcomed. It is packed in a transparent plastics container and supplied with 1000 staples; it takes a load of 50 of these staples for continuous working. This appliance, produced by a reputable firm, is moderate in price.

A 'PEN' FOR STICKING

Another method of joining papers together is more unusual. The appliance used is a syringe-pump type of pen; on being pressed, the syringe delivers a small drop of white rubber adhesive. A piece of paper pressed on to this tiny drop before it dries will be securely held. The pen, which, of course, has a cap to cover the syringe end when not in use, is most useful for attaching cheques or receipts to letters, or for attaching newspaper-cuttings to reports or manuscripts. If only one drop of the adhesive is used for attachment, the piece of attached paper can later be quite easily pulled off without risk of damage, although it has meanwhile been firmly held. The pen has, however, many other uses. If a series of drops is used, cuttings or photographs may be fixed into albums; loose corners of wallpaper may be refixed to walls; book-bindings may be repaired; and parcels may be sealed. The adhesive is non-odorous and clean. If it gets on to the hands, it can be removed by rubbing off and without any special cleansing operation.

The pen, which is plastics-made and of attractive coloured appearance, sells at only a few shillings, and refill-bottles of the adhesive containing sufficient for approximately ten refills (equivalent to some 50,000 drops) are also quite cheap.

DEALING WITH ROT

Ideally, houses should not be damp. In practice, many are, or possess dangerously damp parts in their anatomy. Where woodwork is in contact with walls that tend to develop dampness there is a serious risk of dry or wet rot, and fungicidal treatment is often needed. Usually this involves a liquid treatment, and one consequence of this may be damage to decorations. A new approach to the problem is the development of solid fungicidal plugs which can be inserted into holes drilled in the wall close to skirting-boards or joists. As the wall itself contains dampness, the plug is gradually dissolved, and the fungicide then gives protection to the adjacent woodwork. These new plugs are recommended by the producers for use in circumstances when more complete reconstruction to deal with dampness, or the insertion of a damp-course, would be too costly. Obviously, their use is well worth considering in very old houses, built before the days of damp-courses.

SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE

A PLASTICS BATH

Baths for the nursery are already being made with plastics materials, but now a full-sized domestic bath made from reinforced plastics is offered. The reinforcing substance employed is glass fibre; the use of this remarkable glass-plastics combination for making boats, motor-cycle chassis, etc., has been referred to previously in these columns. The new bath has an attractive design, as would be expected when manufacture can take advantage of the moulding technique. It is self-coloured, in white, and the makers claim that chipping cannot occur as there is no applied surface-coating, the finish being that of the actual constructional resin. As glass-fibre-reinforced plastics have high heat-insulating properties, it is claimed that the bath-water will maintain its temperature longer than in baths constructed of more readily heat-conducting materials. The bath weighs only 45 pounds, but it has high strength and resilience, and damage in transit or during handling operations of installation—always possible with larger domestic equipment—seems likely to have a low risk of occurrence.

THE ATOM AND AIRSHIPS

It has recently been suggested in the United States that the development of atomic power may bring a revival of the airship. It is not irrelevant that all world records for flight without refuelling are held by an airship, a U.S. Navy non-rigid vessel, 351 feet long and 81 feet in diameter, inflated with helium gas. The decline of the airship has several explanations. For military use, it presents too big a target. In civil use, several disasters between the wars indicated that structural problems had been incompletely solved. But probably the major cause of decline has been the hard fact that only in America are there natural supplies of helium gas, and therefore most airships had to be inflated with hydrogen, a violently-inflammable gas. But helium is one of the by-products of atomic fission; thus, though possibly looking well ahead into the future of atomic development, it may be possible for an airship to be fuelled by a

nuclear propulsion-plant which also provides helium to replenish the ship's supply. An aircraft of this kind might be able to remain in flight almost indefinitely; certainly present records of 4700 miles flight and eight continuous flying-days would be dwarfed.

In the light of present knowledge, a nuclear plant would inevitably weigh more than orthodox airship engines and the fuel carried for them, but new fabrics for airship envelopes have already been developed which have greater strength-weight ratios and save several thousand pounds in total airship weight. The future use of one new fabric of this kind is expected to double the range of orthodox airships simply by converting the weight saved into additional fuel. Another advance that is little known because world interest in airships has declined has emerged from research into the boundary layer of air that clings to the surfaces of all types of aircraft; what is now known about controlling the effects of this layer has already revolutionised U.S. Navy airship design and enabled development of greater speeds and longer cruising ranges.

Except perhaps in America, younger people to-day have never seen a silver-glistening cigar-shaped airship in flight. This disappearance, paradoxical in an air-minded age, may yet prove merely temporary.

A TAPE FOR TYING PARCELS

As every shopper knows, many kinds of tape, adhesive or non-adhesive, are used to-day in parcelling goods purchased. This modern versatility has now been increased by the production of a tying tape made from rayon fibres embedded in transparent coloured cellulose. This is yet another example of strength being given to a plastics material by reinforcing it with fibres. The new tape has a breaking-strain of from 30 to 35 lb. according to width. It is sold only in 500 or 1000 yard spools, quantities of interest only to shops, warehouses, factories, etc. Available in four standard colours, it may also be overprinted for advertising purposes. There are two widths—three-eighths and three-sixteenths of an inch.

TO CORRESPONDENTS who wish fuller information regarding new inventions, publications, etc. mentioned here, addresses will be furnished, when possible, if (and only if) a stamped addressed envelope or postcard for a reply be sent to the Editor, *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh. To avoid delays, requests of this kind from correspondents abroad will be forwarded to the manufacturer or agent if stamps, postal orders, or imperial or international reply coupons are enclosed for the purpose. The issue of the *Journal* and the heading of the paragraph in which the object of inquiry is described should be given in order to facilitate reference.

Pools, Bulbs, and Formality

THERE is nothing wrong with a formal pool, despite what some of the pundits say. It doesn't matter whether it is round or square or rectangular, as long as it fits into the picture and the surrounds are treated in a formal manner. Many a pool has formed a special little garden of its own; it may be suitably placed at the bottom of the lawn or quite close to the house, and it is a very nice idea to go on with the formality and to choose the beds that surround the pool for bulbs in the spring, with the right type of carpeting-plants.

Bulbs look grand when planted in square beds on a terrace garden, with the crazy or squared paving paths in between and the pool in the middle. When the bulbs are over, these beds can always be used for petunias or geraniums, for the dwarf type of dahlias, or even for zinnias with, say, the little French marigolds as a carpet below them. However, we are not discussing the summer beds; we are thinking of what may be done for the spring. The bulbs will be planted in lines running parallel with the edges of the beds, or, when the beds are circular, what is called diagonal planting is carried out; this looks rather like the wedges that are seen when an orange is cut through transversely.

Don't, whatever you do, try to carry out a complicated system of planting. If the beds are small, stick to one colour per bed and get it absolutely ablaze. If you are a beginner and try to produce a Union Jack with tulips, you are sure to find that some of the rows are not straight and the whole flag looks a bit 'wobbly'. Be very careful when you do plant, because the bulbs are going to come up and show everybody whether your lines have really been straight or not.

If you are going to use carpeting-plants, as they are called, put these in first and then you can be sure to plant the bulbs exactly in between them. If the beds are near the house, then use the scented bulbs and the fragrance will be wafted in through the windows and will please you very much. Hyacinths are particularly useful in this connection, as are the chionodoxas and certain narcissi. Plant bulbs of every type the same depth. Make a blunt-ended dibber from an old spade-handle,

if you like, and mark it carefully with a red-hot poker so that you always push the dibber down to the same depth. Because of the dibber's blunt end, the bulb, when put in position, will sit firmly on the bottom of the hole and will not land three-quarters of the way down with an air pocket below.

When planning out the bedding schemes see that the size and the height of the plants correspond with the size of the beds. If you are lucky enough to have a very large garden, then you may want the plants to be quite tall. Though the beds are to be only 3 or 4 feet square, it is inadvisable to have the bulk of the plants no taller than say 8 or 9 inches. Sometimes people ask me what bedding schemes I have found particularly successful, and, if this should be in the mind of any reader, I would make the following suggestions, with the proviso that it is always possible to plan better ones with thought and experience.

If you like irises, like the blue imperator, then the viola Palmer's White makes a very good carpet below. If, on the other hand, you prefer a yellow iris, try as carpeting-plants St Brigid anemones. The daffodil Marian Crann looks beautiful when carpeted with the aubrietia Dr Mules, while the Pheasant's Eye narcissus goes well with a mixed bed of polyanthus. If it is hyacinths, then try the red John Boss with the winter-flowering pansies Ice King below, or, if you prefer a blue, buy King of the Blues and carpet these with the double white arabis.

These schemes are just suggestions. There is no need to buy the largest and most expensive bulbs. Generally speaking, the smaller sizes make quite a brave show. Plant the crocuses 3 inches apart and 2 inches deep, the tulips 5 inches apart and 4 inches deep, the hyacinths 6 inches apart and 5 inches deep, and the narcissus and daffodils 8 inches apart and about the same depth. The irises can be planted about 3 inches deep and from 6 to 8 inches apart.

I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER, M.B.E., N.D.H.

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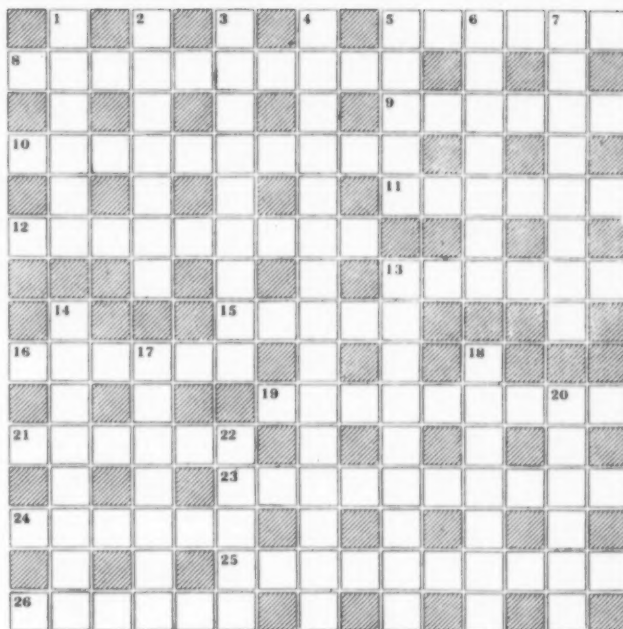
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CHAMBERS'S DICTIONARY

CROSSWORD No. 28

ACROSS

- 5 Dance opens with dance (6).
 8 Result from nightly press of work (2 words: 5.5).
 9 Might be within the act (6).
 10 Marred, but not necessarily in the matter of contour (10).
 11 Let off—from drill finally? (6).
 12 Allow one of the Armed Forces (2 words: 4.5).
 13 Orator, lighter than air (2 words: 3.3).
 's kind of flood can be a bore (5).
 Expedition that clearly far. Good hunting!
 .otics (anag.: 9).
 Cry made by 26 across (6).
 23 What little Tommy described as 'A man with an ass where his trousers ought to be' (10).
 24 Kind of wool (6).
 26 See 21 across (6).



Composed by JOAN BENTON

No 28

DOWN

- 1 Bind it I might be, for this animal (6).
 2 Deceived, heartily? (7).
 3 'Paste cord,' says Chambers's Dictionary (9).
 4 Are the inmates required to signify their satisfaction of this establishment? (2 words: 8.7).
 5 Not a single woman is this (5).
 6 Not wanted in Christmas stockings (7).

DOWN (cont.)

- 7 Model for a river, a politician, and household god (8).
 13 Look over, and ricochet (2 words: 6.3).
 14 Her rule is ephemeral (2 words: 3.5).
 17 New in a worldly way (7).
 18 Signals of course (2 words: 3.4).
 20 Proust was unconscious of this (6).
 22 Machines appear, threateningly? (5).

Three prizes of book tokens to the value of ten shillings and sixpence each will be awarded to the senders of the first correct solutions opened.

Entries must arrive not later than the 15th November.

Envelopes should be clearly marked **CROSSWORD** in the top left-hand corner. The closing date unavoidably confines the entry to those resident in Great Britain, N. Ireland and Eire.

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